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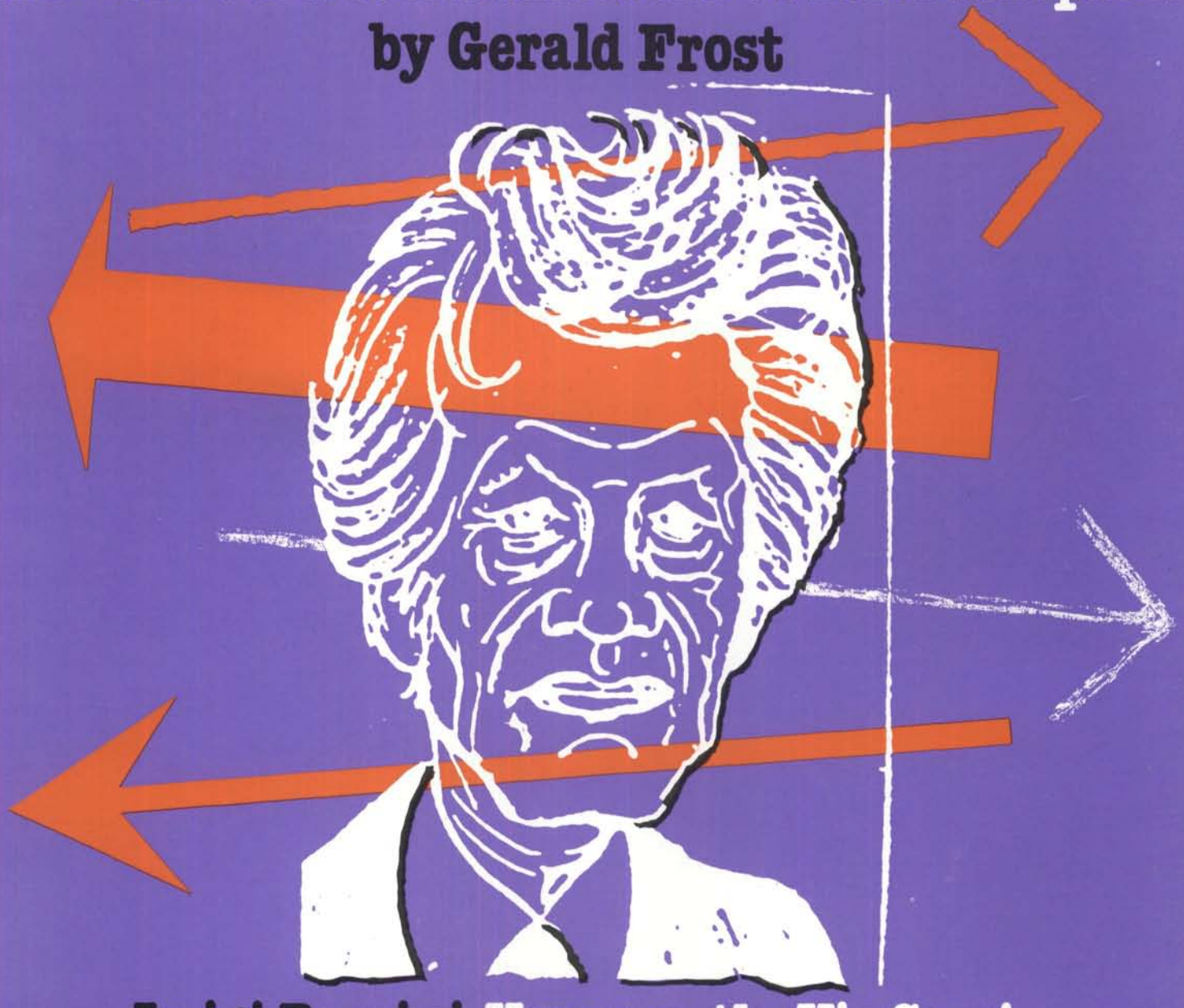

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William Trevor

Bodily Secrets

AT FIFTY-NINE, she was on her own, the widow of the O'Neill who had inherited the town's coal business, who had started, as an enterprise of his own, the toy factory. Her children had flown the nest, her parents and her parents-in-law were no longer alive. Her husband had been in his lifetime a smallish though heavily-built man, with wide shoulders and an unrelenting, cropped head, like a battering wedge. His cautious eyes had been set well apart beneath woolly eyebrows; small veins had reddened his nose. He had died at the age of sixty-three, falling down in the big, airy hall of Arcangelo House and afterwards not regaining any real awareness of who he was or what had happened. He had built Arcangelo House after he and his wife had stayed in an Italian hotel of that name when they visited Rome on the occasion of Holy Year.

A beauty once, she was a handsome woman still, tall and imposing in her middle age, with a well-covered look that reflected her liking for sweet things. Her grey hair was shaded towards its original brown, and discreetly burnished; she bought clothes extravagantly. She made up her face with precision, taking her time over it; and attended similarly to her fingernails and, in season, her toe-nails. She had borne four children in all, two of her three daughters being married now, one in Dublin, the other in Trim; the third was a nurse in Philadelphia. Her son, married also, ran the coal business but was more interested in developing a thousand acres of turf bog he had bought and which he saw as the beginning of an enterprise which he believed would in time outstrip his father's and his grandfather's already established empire. He had inherited their entrepreneur's spirit, and since he'd first been aware of the role laid down for him he had seen himself as their rival. He was married to Thelma, daughter of a Portarlington publican, a girl whom Mrs O'Neill did not care for, considering her common. Particularly she did not care for the thought that one day Thelma would take her own place in Arcangelo House.

From the garden and the upstairs windows the house offered, over fields, a view of the town that was interrupted only by the toy factory. When the wind blew from the south it carried sounds rendered faint over the distance: the cries of children, a car being started somewhere, the saws in the timber works, the grind of a heavy lorry on Daly's Hill. And no matter where the wind came from there was always the bell at the convent, and the bell of Our Lady in Glory, and the Protestant bell on Sundays. At night the street lights and the lights of houses were spread out prettily—the town seen at its best, as Mrs O'Neill often reflected. But increasingly in the vacuum that Arcangelo House had become she reflected also that she felt like a pebble in a drum, and said as much to her bridge companions. They urged her to sell it and build a bungalow, but privately she felt that a bungalow was not her style.

When her husband had died Mrs O'Neill had been fifty-six, and although they had regularly disagreed in their thirty-seven years of marriage, they had more often been affectionate companions. They had shared two interests in particular: golf and their children. Together they had attended the occasional race-meeting; and while her husband had not played bridge, she in turn had not inclined to join him in the bar of the Commercial Hotel, where he liked to spend an evening or two a week. Every summer they went to Lahinch or Bundoran for the golf, and for several years after Holy Year they had returned to Rome, to the hotel which had given their house its character and its name. Often, on a night which wasn't a bridge night, Mrs O'Neill wondered about the future and whether she should indeed sell Arcangelo House. When the television came to an end she sat alone in the big open drawing-room, feeling just a little lonely and vaguely wishing that there was another interest in her life besides bridge and golf and her grown-up family. Time had dulled the loss that widowhood had brought, but in no way had it filled the vacuum that was somehow more apparent as time progressed. Once she'd been the centre of things in Arcangelo House, looking after everyone, in charge of other people's lives. "Ah, come on now", she'd said a thousand times to the husband who'd died on her. "You're as big a baby as any of them."

In her days as a beauty she had more or less designed the house herself, standing over MacGuire the architect and endeavouring to picture for him a cool, well-organised hotel in Rome. It still pleased her that she had succeeded so well, not that Arcangelo House was to

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everyone's taste, she was well aware of that: it was too different, too modern, in a way too grand. But old Canon Kenny, the most educated man for miles about, said he would wager money that the house was the most intriguing to be found outside Dublin. It had been featured in *Social and Personal* and MacGuire, who was inordinately proud of it, had once asked if a German architect, on a motoring holiday, might come and see it. How could she just leave it all? The garden, once little better than waste land, had gorgeously matured. The portico, with its clean white arches, was rich with different clematis from June to August. The patio was warm enough to have breakfast on in March. Yet the accomplishing of what she'd wanted in the house and in the garden belonged to the time when she'd been in charge, and were a reminder that nothing now was changing or taking shape due to her efforts.

Occasionally, pursuing such lines of thought, she wondered if she would marry again. She couldn't help herself; she had no desire to remarry, yet widows did so, it was something that quite often occurred. At the golf club there was Sweetman, a few years younger than herself, a bachelor all his life, pleasantly sociable but bleary when he had drink taken, and according to Dolores Fitzfynne a tightwad. There was O'Keefe, who was her own age, but it was hard to think of O'Keefe without thinking also of the Mrs O'Keefe there had been, a drear of a woman who had played neither golf nor bridge, who hadn't even had children: O'Keefe had been infected by her dreariness or else had infected her in the first place. There was no one else, except perhaps Agnew, with his long, thin face and his hands, which were long also, gesturing in the air, and his faintly high-pitched voice. He was younger than the others, younger than she was herself by seven or eight years, yet she often thought of him in this connection. She thought about him in a different way on the morning her son, Cathal, decreed that the toy factory would have to go. For seventeen years Agnew had been its manager.

In a blue and yellow Paisley dressing-gown which she'd had all her married life she sat on the edge of her bed, listening to her son saying that the people at the toy factory could easily be absorbed elsewhere, that for a long time now he had systematically been running the business down. The toy factory had been profitable only in the immediate post-war years, unable ultimately to sustain the competition which had so ominously built up: long before his death her husband had been saying it would sooner or later have to close. It was a tiny concern, the loss would not be great.

"All they're making now are the fox-terriers", Cathal said on the telephone, referring to wooden fox-terriers on wheels.

"The building?" she said. "Best to have it down, wouldn't it?"

"I could bail garden peat there. I'm going into that, you know."

She did not say anything. She did not trust this dark-faced son she'd given birth to. Ceasing to be a toy factory, the building would be expanded when it became the location for one of his enterprises. There might be noise, even a smell of chemicals: you simply couldn't guess what would come along in order that more money might be made. And why should it matter since only a lone woman lived near by?

"We'll have to see", she said.

"Ah, of course, of course. No hurry at all."

She did not ask about Agnew. She could not see him being absorbed into the turf business or the coal business, and in any case Cathal didn't like him. Cathal would have him out on the street while you'd wink.

Cathal had his father's wedge of a head, his forehead and wide-apart, narrow eyes. He was the first of their children to be born, the one who had received more attention because the others were girls. Heir to so much, he had been claimed by a thrusting entrepreneur's world from infancy. The girls, except for Siobhan in Philadelphia, had been more mundanely claimed by men.

She wouldn't have minded any of the others being in Arcangelo House, but Thelma had a greedy way of looking at her, as if she couldn't wait to get into the place. Mrs O'Neill dearly wished that her son hadn't married this girl, but he had and that was that. She sighed as she replaced the receiver, seeing Thelma's slightly puffy face, her nose too small for the rest of it. She sat for a moment longer, endeavouring to release her imagination of that face and in the end succeeding. Then she dressed herself and went down to the toy factory. Agnew was in the inner office, standing by the window, his back to her as she entered.

"Mr Agnew."

"Ah, Mrs O'Neill. Come in, come in, Mrs O'Neill." He moved so swiftly in turning to greet her that she was reminded of the assured way he danced the quickstep. He came every December to the Golf Club Dance even though he was not a club member and had once confided to her that he had never played the game. "Croquet", he'd confided also. "I used to be quite snappy at croquet." He had his own expressions, a way of putting things that sometimes sounded odd. Typical that he should mention an old-fashioned game like croquet.

"I hope you're not busy, Mr Agnew. I'm not disturbing you, am I?"

"Heavens above, why would you be? Won't you take a chair, Mrs O'Neill? A cup of tea now?"

There was always this formality. He offered it and seemed shyly to demand it. Her husband had always used his surname, and so did Cathal; at the Golf Club Dance she'd heard other men call him by his initials, B.J. She couldn't in a million years imagine him addressing her as Norah.

"No, I won't have tea, thank you."

"A taste of sherry at all? I have a nice sweet little sherry—"

"No thanks. Really, Mr Agnew."

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He smiled, gently closing a glass-fronted cabinet he had opened in expectation of her accepting his hospitality. He was wearing a brown suit chalked with a pinstripe, and a brown silk tie. He said:

"Well, it seems we have come to the end of the road."

"I know. I'm awfully sorry."

"Mr O'Neill saw it coming years ago."

"Yes, I'm afraid he did."

He smiled again; his voice was unperturbed. "The first day I came up to Arcangelo House I was terrified out of my wits. D'you remember, Mrs O'Neill? Your husband had an advertisement for the job in the *Irish Times*."

"It seems an age ago."

"Doesn't it, though? An age."

His long face had acquired a meditative expression. He drew a packet of cigarettes from a pocket of his jacket and opened it slowly, folding back the silver paper. He advanced a single cigarette by knocking the packet on the surface of his desk. He leaped towards her, offering it. His wrists were slim and tanned: she had never noticed his wrists before.

"Thank you, Mr Agnew."

He leaned across the desk again, holding the flame of a cigarette-lighter to the tip of her cigarette. It gleamed with the dull patina of gold, as slender as a coin.

"No, I don't entirely know what I'll do." He lit his own cigarette and then held it, dangling, in his long fingers.

"Cathal should have something for you. It was my husband's intention, you know, that everyone at the toy factory should be offered something."

She wanted to make that clear; she wanted to record this unequivocal statement in the inner office so that later on, if necessary, she could quote herself to Cathal. She inhaled some smoke and released it luxuriously through her nostrils. She was fond of the occasional cigarette, although she never smoked when she was on her own.

"I'm not so sure I'd entirely fit in, Mrs O'Neill. I don't know anything about selling turf."

She mentioned coal, which after all was the fuel that had made the O'Neills wealthy. There was still a thriving coal business, the biggest in the county.

He shook his head. His hair, once reddish, was almost entirely grey now. "I don't think", he said, "I'd be at home in coal."

"Well, I only thought I'd mention it."

"It's more than kind, Mrs O'Neill."

"My husband wouldn't have wanted anyone not looked after."

"Oh, indeed I know it."

She stared at the lipstick mark on her cigarette and then raised the cigarette to her mouth again. It was awkward because she didn't want to walk out of the factory smoking a cigarette, yet it was too soon to crush it out on the ashtray in front of her.

"If there's any way the family can help, you'll say, Mr Agnew?"

"I suppose I'll go to Dublin."

THE REMARK WAS NOT ACCOMPANIED by one of his glancing smiles; he gave no sign whatsoever that he'd touched upon a fascinating topic. No one knew why he spent weekends occasionally in Dublin, and a certain curiosity had gathered round the mystery of these visits. There was some secret which he kept, which he had not even confided to her husband in his lifetime. He came back melancholy was all her husband had ever reported, and once or twice with bloodshot eyes as if he had spent the time drinking.

"Though I'd rather not end up in Dublin", he added now. "To tell you the full truth, Mrs O'Neill, it's not a city I entirely care for."

She bent the remains of her cigarette in half, extinguishing it on the ashtray. She stood up, thinking it odd that he'd said Dublin wasn't somewhere he cared for since he visited it so regularly.

"The toy factory was a favourite of my husband's. It saddened him to see it decline."

"It had its heyday."

"Yes, it had its day."

She went, walking with him from the office, through a shed full of unassembled terriers on wheels. The white cut-out bodies with a brown spot around the tail, the brown head, the little platform that carried the wheels, the wheels themselves: all these dislocated parts lay about in stacks, seeming unwanted. No one was working in the shed.

He walked with her through other deserted areas, out on to the gravel forecourt that stretched in a semicircle around the front of the small factory. A man loaded wired cartons on to a lorry. They were still meeting orders in England, Agnew told her. The paint shop was as active as ever, three girls on full time.

He held his hand out, his long, narrow features illuminated by another smile. His palm was cool, his grip gentle. He asked her not to worry about him. He assured her he'd be all right.

THERE WERE GUSTS OF LAUGHTER in the club-house. Dessie Fitzfynne had told a Kerry joke, concerning eight Kerry gardai and a cow. Dolores Fitzfynne, who'd just gone round in 82 and wanted to talk about that instead, requested that he shouldn't tell another. Sweetman was talking about horses, arranging something about going to the Curragh. Sweetman loved getting parties together to go racing or to Lansdowne Road, or for a weekend down in Kelly's at Rosslare. Paunchy and rubicund, Flanagan kept saying it was his turn and what did anyone want?

"I heard the factory's winding up", the solicitor, Butler-Regan, remarked in his rowdy voice and she nodded, suddenly feeling dismal. She had forgotten

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about the toy factory while she'd been on the golf-course, going round in 91, taking a three to get out of the rough at the eighth. She'd been playing with Dessie Fitzfynne, opposing Dolores and Flanagan. They'd been beaten, of course.

It was silly to feel dismal just because the facts of commerce dictated the closure of an unprofitable concern. As both Cathal and Agnew had intimated, the end had been a matter of anticipation for years. Only sentiment had prevented such a decision in the lifetime of her husband.

"Ah well, there you are", Butler-Regan said noisily. "Tis better let it go, Norah."

Flanagan handed her another gin and French even though she hadn't asked for one. Overhearing the reference to the toy factory, he said:

"I hear Agnew's wondering what to do with himself."

"The bold Agnew!" Butler-Regan laughed. He, too, was paunchy and rubicund. He added, laughing again, shouting through this laughter. "Oh, Master Agnew'll fall on his feet, I'd say."

They all liked Agnew even though he was so different. He was an easy companion for half an hour or so if you happened to run into him in the bar of the Commercial Hotel; he was always willing to drop into conversation with you on the street. He had digs with the Misses Malone in a house called St Kevin's, where he was regularly to be seen tending the front garden, behind silver-painted railings set in a low concrete wall. He also walked the Misses Malone's dog, Judy, about the town and on Sundays he attended the Protestant Church unless he happened to be in Dublin.

"We'd all miss Agnew", Flanagan said. "That wild Protestant man." He laughed, making such the same explosive sound that the solicitor did. Did any of them realise, she wondered, that Agnew's quickstep put them all to shame every December?

"Oh, wild is right", Butler-Regan agreed. "Wasn't he in the city again a week ago?"

The two men laughed in unison, the burst of noise causing Rita Flanagan to glance sharply across the bar to ascertain if her husband was already drunk. In dog's-tooth skirt and soft fawn golfing-jacket, Mrs O'Neill wondered what any of them would think if they knew that quite involuntarily as she stood there, she had begun to speculate on the possibility of not remaining for ever the widow she presently was. She sipped her gin and French, not taking part in a conversation about Sweetman's outing to the Curragh. In the same involuntary manner she found herself following a thread of thought that led her back to her wedding day. The O'Neills had insisted on paying for the reception, since her own family were not well-to-do. Old Canon Kenny—neither old nor a Canon then—had conducted the service, assisted by a curate called Prendergast, who had later left the priesthood. They had gone to Bray for their honeymoon and on their first night in the International Hotel she had been jittery. She hadn't known how it should be, whether she should simply take her clothes off or wait for him to say something, whether or not there was going to be preliminary kissing. She'd gone as red as anything after they'd come up from the restaurant. "I think that waiter knew", she'd whispered on the stairs, not noticing that there was a maid just behind him. He'd been jittery too, and in the end it was she who inaugurated the kissing and in fact had taken his tie off. What on earth would it be like being in a bedroom in Bray with Agnew? There was fat on her shoulders now, which hadn't been there before, and naturally her thighs and her hips were no longer the same. Her body had been forgotten in that particular way for many years before her husband's death, almost since the birth of Siobhan. They had come to occupy separate bedrooms in Arcangelo House, having reached the decision that Cathal and the three girls were enough. At first, when it was safe to do so, she had visited the other bedroom, but the habit had dwindled and then ceased. Would it be a form of unfaithfulness to resume it in different circumstances now? It wasn't easy to guess how such things stood at fifty-nine.

O'Keefe, the widower of the woman who'd been a drear, approached her with the usual sorrowful look in his eyes, as if he still mourned the wife who had played neither bridge nor golf. The eyes themselves, lurking in their despondent wateriness behind spectacles, had pinkish rims and were the only feature you noticed in O'Keefe's flat face, except possibly his teeth, which moved uncomfortably in his jaw when he ate. He was eating now, chewing crisps from a transparent Tayto bag. His hair was like smooth lead; his bony limbs jutted from his clothes. There was no doubt whatsoever that O'Keefe, the manager of a butter business, was looking for a housekeeper in the form of a second wife. There was always a nudge or two in the clubhouse when he approached Mrs O'Neill for a chat.

"Ah, didn't I have a terrible round? Did you see me in front of you, Norah? Wasn't I shocking?"

She denied that. She hadn't noticed his misfortunes, she said, which indeed she hadn't. She might have added that the butter manager couldn't be shocking if he tried for the rest of his life.

"I've been meaning to ask you", he said. "Would you be interested in a bunch of sweet-peas from the garden, Norah?"

She drank more gin and French. She had plenty of sweet-peas at Arcangelo House, she replied, though it was very good of him to offer her more.

"Or the asparagus fern? D'you grow that stuff?"

"I grow asparagus all right. Only I eat it before the fern comes."

"Ah well, why wouldn't you, Norah?"

SWEETMAN, AT THE BAR, was sweating like an animal. No woman in her senses would want to marry Sweetman. His trouble with perspiration ironically denied his name, and the cageyness Dolores Fitzfynne

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claimed for him would hardly have been easy to live with. He had a tendency towards forgetfulness when his round came up in the clubhouse and, according to Dolores, the parties he organised for race-meetings or Lansdowne Road were done so to his own pecuniary advantage. "Too mingy with himself to look sideways at a woman", Dolores had said, and probably she was right. He was a surveyor with the county council; and if he gave you a lift in his car he had a way of mentioning the high price of petrol.

She watched Sweetman while O'Keefe continued in his tedious manner, offering her marigold plants. It had surprised her when Agnew had said he'd never in his life played golf. She'd thought afterwards that he would probably have been good. He had the look of someone who had been athletic in his time. His dancing suggested ball-sense, she didn't know why.

"To tell you the honest truth, I don't much care for marigolds."

"The wife loved them. Give Mrs O'Keefe a box of marigolds and she'd be pricking them out till Kingdom come."

He wagged his head; she nodded hers. She allowed a silence to develop in the hope that he'd go away. He said eventually:

"D'you ever watch that thing they have, *Dynasty* is it called?"

"I watch it the odd time."

"Will you tell me this, Norah: where do they get the stories?"

"I suppose they invent them."

"Isn't America the shocking place though?"

"I have a daughter there."

"Ah sure, of course you have."

At the bar Butler-Regan looked as though he might sing. Very occasionally he did, striking the bar rumbustiously with his fist, trying to make people join in. The club secretary, Dr Walsh, had had to speak to him, explaining that it wasn't usual to sing in a golf club, even adding that he didn't think it quite the thing for a solicitor to sing anywhere. But Butler-Regan had done so again, and had again to be warned. It was said that his wife, who like the late Mrs O'Keefe played neither bridge nor golf, had a terrible time with him.

"Does your girl ever remark on the *Dynasty* thing to you?" O'Keefe was enquiring. "I mean, if it might be accurate?"

"Siobhan has never mentioned *Dynasty*."

"Well, isn't that extraordinary?"

TEN MINUTES LATER the drinking in the clubhouse broke up and Mrs O'Neill drove back to Arcangelo House. She made scrambled egg and watched a film about drug-running on the television. The police of several nations pursued a foursome of gangsters and finally ran the ringleader to earth in Los Angeles. She dozed off, and when she woke up a priest with a Cork accent was talking about the feast of Corpus Christi and she listened to him until he'd finished and then turned the television off.

In her bedroom she did something she had not done for ten years at least: before she slipped into her nightdress she paused in front of the long looking-glass of her wardrobe and surveyed her naked body. It was most certainly no longer her best feature, she said to herself, remembering it when she was a child, standing up in the bath to be dried. She remembered being naked at last in the bedroom of the International Hotel in Bray, and the awkward voluptuousness that had followed. The bearing of four children, her fondness for sweet things, the insidious nips of gin in the clubhouse: in combination they had taken a toll, making clothes as necessary as all that meticulous care with make-up and hair. The first time she'd been pregnant, with Cathal, she had looked at herself in this same looking-glass, assuring herself that the enormous swelling would simply go away, as indeed it had. But nothing would go away now. Flesh hung loosely, marked with pink imprints of straps or elastic. If she slimmed herself to the bone there would be scrawny, empty skin, loops and pockets, hollows as ugly as the bulges. She drew her nightdress over her head and a pattern of pink roses in tight little bunches hid what she preferred not to see, transforming her again into a handsome woman.

AGNEW HAD SENSITIVE SKIN, yet could not resist the quality of finely woven tweed. He chose the sober colours, the greys and browns and inconspicuous greens. He bought his Donegal tweed in Kevin and Howlins in Dublin and had the suits made up by a tailor in Rathmines. Because of his sensitive skin he had the trousers lined.

Agnew had never worn these suits to his office in the toy factory, for they did not seem to him to be sufficiently matter-of-fact for business. He wore them at week-ends, when he went to church and on Sunday afternoons when he drove out to Rathfarran and walked around the cliffs, ending up in Lynch's Bar down by the strand, where by arrangement he took his Sunday supper. He wore them also on the week-ends when he went to Dublin.

He would miss the cliffs and the strand, he reflected at breakfast one morning, a few weeks after his visit from Mrs O'Neill. He would miss the toy factory too, of course, and people he had come to know in a passing kind of way, without intimacy or closeness but yet agreeably. In the snug, overcrowded dining-room of the terraced house called St Kevin's he broke a piece of toast in half and poured himself more tea. He had been fortunate in St Kevin's, fortunate because he was the only lodger and because the Misses Malone had never sought to share a meal with him, fortunate that the house was clean and the cooking averagely good. He'd been fortunate that his interest had never flagged in the job at

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the toy factory. He would take away with him a sample of every single wooden toy that had been manufactured during his time there: the duck with the quivering bill, the kangaroos, the giraffes, the little red steam-engines, the donkeys and carts, the bricks, the elephants, the fox-terriers on wheels, and all the others. He was proud of these toys and of his part in their production. They were superior in every possible way—more ingeniously designed, constructed with greater craftsmanship, more fondly finished—to the torrent of shoddiness that had flooded them out of existence.

"I'll miss you too", he said aloud in the overcrowded dining-room, staring down at the spaniel, Judy, who was wagging her tail in the hope of receiving a rind of bacon. She would eat rinds only if they were so brittle that they broke between her teeth. This morning, Agnew knew, what he had left would not satisfy her: the bacon had not been overdone. He lit a cigarette, folded the *Irish Times*, which earlier he had been reading, and left the dining-room, pursued by the dog. "I'm off now, Miss Malone", he called out in the hall, and one of the sisters called back to him from the kitchen. Judy, as she always did, followed him through the town to the toy factory, turning back when he reached the forecourt.

A woman called Mrs Whelan who came to the factory three mornings a week to attend to whatever typing there was and to keep the books up to date, was to finish at the end of the week. She was there this morning, a prim, trim presence in navy-blue, conscientiously tapping out the last of the invoices. The final delivery was due to be dispatched that afternoon, for Cathal O'Neill had already laid down the peremptory instruction that further orders must not be accepted.

"Good morning, Mrs Whelan."

"Good morning, sir."

Interrupted for the briefest of moments, she went on typing: she would be extremely useful to someone else, Agnew reflected, if she managed to find a position that suited her. "I think I'm going to start cleaning the inner office", he said, passing into it reluctantly, for it was not a task he anticipated with any pleasure. What on earth was he going to do with himself? Fifty-one was far too young simply to retire, even if he could afford to. It was all very well saying he couldn't see himself in the fuel business, either coal or turf, but what alternative was there going to be? In the failing toy factory he had had a position, he had been of some small importance, and he had often wondered if he himself—and the predicament he must find himself in when the factory closed—hadn't been an element in his late employer's sentiment. Had Mr O'Neill lived, the toy factory might have struggled on until a convenient moment was reached, when its manager might gracefully retire. Still, a father's sentiment rarely passed to a son, nor could it be expected to.

He took his jacket off and hung it up. As he did so the telephone rang and the widow of his late and sentimental employer invited him to what she described as a very small party on Sunday evening. It would be in his honour, he said to himself after he had politely accepted. It was the kind of thing people did; there might even be a presentation in the conventional way, of cutlery or Waterford glass or a clock.

"NOW, THIS IS bloody ridiculous!" Cathal glared at his mother, squinting in his extreme rage. She remembered that squint in his pram. She remembered how his face would turn scarlet before exploding like a volcano, how he would beat his fists against her when she tried to lift him up. His father had had a bad temper also, though over the years she had learnt to ignore it.

"It isn't ridiculous at all, Cathal."

"You are fifty-nine years of age."

"I'm only too well aware of that."

"Agnew's our employee, for God's sake!" He said something else and then broke off, his shout becoming an incompressible stutter. He began again, calming down and collecting himself. "My God, when I think of Agnew!"

"I invited Basil Agnew—"

"Basil? *Basil*?"

"You knew his name was Basil. B. J. Agnew. It's on all the letters."

"In no way did I know the man's name was Basil. I didn't know what his bloody name was."

"Don't be violent, Cathal."

"Aw, for God's sake now!" He turned away from her. He crossed the Italianate drawing-room and stood with his back to her, morosely looking out of the window.

"I invited Basil Agnew to a little evening I had and he stayed on afterwards to help me clear up a bit. The Flanagans were there, and the Fitzfynnes and a few others. It was all quite above board, Cathal. Father Doherty was there, quite happy with the arrangement."

"You were seen out at Rathfarran with Agnew. You were in Lynch's with him."

"That was later on, the following Sunday it was. And of course we were in Lynch's. We had two glasses of whiskey each in Lynch's, and then we had our supper there."

"Will you for God's sake examine what you're doing? You hardly know Agnew."

"I've known him for seventeen years."

Cathal mentioned his father, who God rest him would be disgusted if he knew, and probably he did know. He could not understand, Cathal repeated for the third time in this tempestuous conversation, how any sane woman could behave like this.

"Well, I have behaved like this, Cathal. I have been asked a question by Basil Agnew and I have answered in the affirmative. I wanted to tell you before I spoke a word to Father Doherty."

"Agnew's a Protestant."

"We'll be married by Father Doherty. Basil isn't the least particular about matters like that."

"I bet you he isn't. The bloody man—"

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"I must ask you, Cathal, not to keep referring to Basil Agnew as a bloody man. I do not refer to Thelma as a bloody woman. When you informed me in this very room that you intended to marry her I held my peace."

"The man's after your money and that's all there's to it."

"You're being most unpleasant, Cathal."

He almost spat. As a child, he had had a most unpleasant habit of spitting. His eyes savaged her as he continued violently to upbraid her and insult the man she had agreed to marry. He left eventually, barging his way out of the drawing-room, shouting back at her from the hall before he barged his way out of the house.

That evening her two married daughters, Eileen in Dublin and Rose in Trim, telephoned her. They were more diplomatic than Cathal, as they had always been. They beseeched her not to be hasty; both offered to come and talk it all over with her. She had written to them, she said; she was sorry Cathal had taken it upon himself to get in touch with them, since she had particularly asked him not to. "It's all in my letter", she assured her daughters in turn. "Everything about how I feel and how I've thought it carefully over." The two men they'd married themselves were, after all, no great shakes: if you were honest you had to say that, one of them little better than a commercial traveller, the other reputed to be the worst veterinary surgeon in Trim. Yet she hadn't made much of a fuss when Eileen first brought her mousy little Liam to Arcangelo House, nor over Rose's Eddie, a younger version of Dessie Fitzfynne, with the same stories about Kerrymen and the same dull bonhomie. "It'll work out grand", she said to her daughters in turn. "Was I ever a fool in anything I did?"

THE FOLLOWING MORNING Thelma came round and in her crude way said how flabbergasted she was. She sat there with her vacant expression and repeated three times that you could have knocked her down with a feather when Cathal had walked in the door and informed her that his mother was intending to marry Agnew. "I couldn't close my mouth", Thelma said. "I was stirring custard in the kitchen and declare to God didn't the damn stuff burn on me. 'She's after getting engaged to Agnew', he said, and if you'd given me a thousand pounds I couldn't go on with the stirring."

Thelma's rigmarole continued, how Cathal had stormed about the kitchen, how he'd shouted at the children and knocked a pot of blackcurrant jam on to the floor with his elbow, how she'd had to sit down to recover herself. Then she lowered her voice as if there were other people in her mother-in-law's drawing-room. "Isn't there a lot of talk, though, about what Agnew gets up to when he goes off to Dublin for the two days? Is it women he goes after?" While she spoke, Thelma nodded vehemently, answering her own question. She'd heard it for certain, she continued in the same subdued voice, that Agnew had women of a certain description up in Dublin.

"That's tittle-tattle, Thelma."

"Ah sure, I'd say it was, all right. Still and all, Mrs O'Neill."

"What Mr Agnew does with his own time is hardly the business of anyone except himself."

"Ah sure, of course 'tisn't. It's only Cathal and myself was wondering."

The moon that was Thelma's face, its saucer eyes and jammy red mouth, the nose that resembled putty, was suddenly closer than Mrs O'Neill found agreeable. It was a way that Thelma had when she was endeavouring to be sincere.

"I had an uncle married late. Sure, the poor man ended demented."

You are the stupidest creature God ever put breath into, Mrs O'Neill reflected, drawing herself back from her daughter-in-law's advancing features. She did not comment on Thelma's uncle any more than she had commented on the burning of the custard or the loss of the pot of blackcurrant jam.

"You know what I mean, Mrs O'Neill?" The subdued tones became a whisper. "A horse-trainer's widow in Portarlington that went after the poor old devil's few pence."

"Well, I'm most certainly not after Mr Agnew's few pence."

"Ah, no, I'm not saying that at all. I'd never say a thing like that, Mrs O'Neill, what you'd be after or what he'd be after. Sure, where'd I find the right to make statements the like of that?"

Thelma eventually went away. She would have been sent by Cathal, who would also have written to Siobhan. But Siobhan had always possessed a mind of her own and in due course a letter arrived from Philadelphia. *I'm delighted altogether at the news. I kind of hoped you'd do something like this.*

IT HAD NEVER, IN THE PAST, occurred to Agnew to get married. Nor would he have suggested it to his late employer's wife if he hadn't become aware that she wished him to. Marriage, she had clearly decided, would be the rescuing of both of them: she from her solitariness in Arcangelo House, he from the awkwardness of being unemployed. She had said she would like him to oversee the demolition of the toy factory and the creation of an apple orchard in its place. This enterprise was her own and had nothing to do with Cathal.

The women she played bridge with still addressed him friendlily when he met them on the street or in a shop. Her golfing companions—especially Flanagan and Fitzfynne—had even been enthusiastic. Butler-Regan had slapped him on the shoulders in the bar of the Commercial Hotel and said he was glad it hadn't been O'Keefe she'd gone for. Only O'Keefe had looked grumpy, not replying to Agnew's greeting when they met in Lawlor's one morning, both of them buying cigarettes. Dolores Fitzfynne telephoned him at the toy factory and said she was delighted. It was a good idea to

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plant an apple orchard on the site of the factory, Cox's and Beauty of Bath, Russets and Bramleys and Worcesters. In the fullness of time the orchard would become her own particular interest, as the toys had been her husband's and the turf-bogs were her son's. It was a pity that the family were almost all opposed to the match, but naturally such a reaction was to be expected.

SHE WAS AWARE OF EYES upon them when they danced together in the clubhouse, bedecked with Christmas decorations. What did these people really think? Did all of them share, while appearing not to, the family's disapproval? Did fat Butler-Regan and fat Flanagan think she was ridiculous, at fifty-nine years of age, to be allowing a man to marry her for her money? Did Dolores Fitzfynne think so? Mrs Whelan, who had been his secretary for so long at the toy factory, always attended the Golf Club Annual Dance with her husband; the Misses Malone, his landladies for the same period of time in the terraced house called St Kevin's, came to help with the catering. Did these three women consider her beneath contempt because she'd trapped a slightly younger attractive man as a companion for her advancing years?

"I've always liked the way you dance the quickstep", she whispered.

"Always?"

"Yes, always."

The confession felt disgraceful. Cathal and Thelma, dancing only yards away, might talk all night about it if they knew. With O'Keefe, she wouldn't have had to be unfaithful in that way.

"You're not entirely devoid of rhythm yourself."

"I've always loved dancing actually."

O'Keefe would have asked for more, and for less. Some hint of man's pride would have caused him scrupulously to avoid touching a penny of her money, nor would he have wanted to go planting apple-trees under her direction. But O'Keefe would have entered her bedroom and staked his claim there, and she could not have borne that.

"We'll be married this time next week", he said. "Do you realise that?"

"Unless you decide to take to the hills."

"No, I'll not do that, Norah."

The Artie Furlong Band, new to the clubhouse this year and already reckoned to be a success, played an old tune she loved: *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes*. His step changed easily, he scarcely touched her as he guided her through the other dancers. Sweetman was appalling to dance with because of his perspiration troubles, Dessie Fitzfynne's knees were always driving themselves into you, Butler-Regan held you far too tight. She'd go on playing bridge and golf after they were married, no reason not to. He'd said he intended to continue exercising the Misses Malone's spaniel.

"You're sure about this?" he whispered, bending his long face closer to hers, smiling a little. "You're absolutely sure, Norah?"

She remembered thinking how she couldn't imagine him ever calling her Norah, and how strange his own Christian name had felt when first she'd used it. She would never know him, she was aware of that; nor could he ever fully know her. There would never be the passion of love between them: all that must be done without.

"I'm sure all right."

The music ceased. They went to get a drink and were joined immediately by the Fitzfynnes and Rita Flanagan. Thelma came up and said one of the children had spots all over his stomach. Cathal kept his distance.

"We're drinking to the happy couple", Dessie Fitzfynne shouted, raising his glass. Thelma scuttled away, as if frightened to be seen anywhere near such a toast.

"Cheers to the both of you", Rita Flanagan shrilled, and in another part of the decorated clubhouse Butler-Regan the solicitor began to sing.

She smiled at the glasses that were raised towards them. "That's very kind of you", he said quietly. "We're touched."

She would have liked to add something, to have sorted out falsity from the truth. He was indeed marrying her for her money. But he, in return, was giving her a role that money could not purchase. Within a week the family would no longer possess her. Cathal's far-apart eyes would no longer dismiss her as a remnant of the dead.

"We're going to have an orchard, you know, where the toy factory is now."

They looked a bit surprised, at first not quite grasping her meaning and then wondering why she should mention an orchard just then.

"Our wedding present to one another", he explained. "Norah's trees and I shall tend them."

The band struck up again, drowning the raucous singing of Butler-Regan. Cathal at last approached his mother and asked her to dance, as every year he did on this Christmas occasion. But he did not at last say that he hoped it would work out all right, Agnew and herself in Arcangelo House. She had paid some price, Cathal believed, apart from the financial one. But Cathal, really, was not right and for him, too, she would have liked to sort out falsity from the truth.

"WELL, THAT IS THAT", he said, turning off the television on a Sunday night, after he had returned from Dublin. He lurched a little as he moved towards her, holding out his packet of cigarettes. He had said, before their marriage, that he often became intoxicated in the course of these weekends. He met his friends and they went from place to place, all of them men who enjoyed the company of men. Sometimes, left alone, or unlucky in the new

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companions he had met, he wandered the quaysides of the city, thinking about the sailors of the ships. On the strand at Rathfarran his face had been averted when he told her this, and when he finished she had not spoken. Dessie Fitzfynne and Sweetman liked men's company also, she had thought, and so had her husband in his lifetime. But that, of course, was not the same.

"I don't think I'll go back there." He swayed, like Flanagan did in drink. "God knows, I don't want to."

He always said that. He always offered her a cigarette after turning off the Sunday television. A moment later he made the renunciatory statement.

"It doesn't matter." She tried to smile, imagining him in the public houses he had told her about, his dignified presence mocked by a man who was once particularly his friend, a waiter who no longer liked him.

"I dread for your sake that someone will find out one of these days. I hadn't thought of that when we married."

"I knew what I was doing. You told me the truth, and you're honourable for that."

When he told her she had not confessed a truth as well: that clothes and make-up disguised a loss she found it hard to bear. She was haunted by herself, by the beauty that had been there in a hotel in Bray. Lingering in the clubhouse on these Sunday nights, she drank more gin and French than usual, knowing he would be tipsy, too, when he returned. Once they'd fallen asleep in their chairs, and she'd woken up at twenty past three and crept away to bed. He'd seemed like a child, one arm hanging down, fingers resting on the carpet. On the strand at Rathfarran he'd told her he never wanted to go to sleep on these Sunday nights because he hated waking up so. In his bedroom at St Kevin's, the door locked against indiscreet entrance by one or other of the Misses Malone, he had sat with the whiskey bottle he'd bought for the purpose in Dublin. She listened while he'd told her that; concerning herself, there'd been no need to say what she might have because, being the man he was, he guessed.

They passed together through the hall of Arcangelo House and mounted the stairs to their separate bedrooms. They paused before they parted, offering in their tipsiness a vague, unstated reassurance. Tomorrow none of this would be mentioned; their common ground would not be traversed on a mundane Monday morning. For a moment on the landing outside their bedrooms they spoke of the orchard that would replace the toy factory, and the trees they would watch growing up.

Dame Nature

Dame nature gives orders to genius
for milk in bottles, geometric fields,
babies prinked all over smiles
and a rule of thumb for happiness.

Let there be donkeys, bluebells, crates
of vegetables, that clean one's teeth,
starry pelts stretched over brutes,
forgetfulness, and hymns to death.

Make me a stuff that holds in rain
and lets out sun little by little.
Invent the woodstove and the kettle.
Summon the swallows home again.

Name presidents and kings their price
for living loud and talking nice.
Dress the beech in his best bark.
Toughen the skins of those who work.

Let stones and pools and tide-wrack be
miniatures of the galaxy.
What we make of them, call years;
what we might have, common tears.

William Scammell

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Gerald Frost

Portrait of a Peace-Fighter

The Collected Contradictions of E. P. Thompson

THERE IS an illuminating footnote in the recent chronicles of the "Peace Movement" which reveals the near-tragic human drama which the gods may have apportioned to it: the conflict between its idealism of humane feeling and good will . . . and its frantic message of propaganda, disinformation, and sheer manipulation.

The incident occurred in May of 1961. Bertrand Russell, then in his 80s but still vigorous as the voluble spokesman of the "Committee of 100", was about to issue yet another personal warning to the warmongers. Khrushchev's Russia and Kennedy's America were in their "eyeball-to-eyeball" Cuban confrontation. Russell, at home in Plas Penrhyn (Wales), wrote:

"Mankind is faced tonight with a grave crisis."

The coarse blue-pencil of Earl Russell's personal and political secretary, Ralph Schoenman, a militant of the Left, changed this to:

> "It seems likely that within a week you will all be dead to please American madmen."

Bertrand Russell pondered the change, and left it intact, merely altering "a week" to "a week or two."[1]

Had the emendations convinced him, or was he under some duress? Did he feel that Ralph Schoenman's editing had actually improved his prose (for which in 1950 he won a Nobel Prize)? Or were the demands for urgent, and even demagogic, communication a top priority in the movement, racked as it was—and still is—with an *angst* that nuclear war was about to break out? (A leading organiser of the CND, Peggy Duff, had already fled to the Irish Sea and had taken refuge in a mountain cave.[2]) Whatever the motive, Bertrand Russell went along with the editorial manipulation. Peace has to be saved at any cost, even including Mephisto's price.

Since that time whole generations of Peace leaders on the English scene have come and gone—all honourable silver-haired gentlemen: Canon Collins, J. B. Priestley, Kingsley Martin, Konni Zilliacus, Sydney Silverman. How much Messianism continued to mix with manipulation in their contributions to the "good old cause" remains for historians and biographers to document. But one further revealing footnote has already been put into the record by a prominent participant in all those Marches to Aldermaston and demos in Trafalgar Square. Peter Cadogan, a member of CND and former national secretary of Bertrand Russell's "Committee of 100", wrote to *The Times* (22 October 1983) trying to correct (not without a note of bitterness) the threadbare apologies for its one-sided ideological tendencies. He stated:

> "The left has effectively led the nuclear disarmament movement since its foundation in 1957–8. The left, however, is neo-Marxist, accepts the power struggle, the nation state, militarism and party politics to match. American imperialism is made out to be the main enemy and the Kremlin let off the hook. The subjects of Afghanistan, Eritrea, and Poland, are taboo. . . . It fell to my lot, as the last national secretary of the Committee of 100 in 1968, to face the fact that we were proceeding in some 12 different directions at once. We had no option but to wind up. Uniting around the next demonstration is not enough."

But it is an old story in the history of ideologies: what one generation comes painfully and slowly to learn about illusions and double standards, a new generation comes along naively to embrace.

The most important mentor of this new generation has been a Marxist historian of the British working class and the philosopher of the academic New Left, E. P. Thompson. Under his skilful intellectual guidance he has taken the Peace Movement out from the two historic shadows under which it has mortally suffered.

The first was pre-War. If "unilateral disarmament" as advocated by those who took the Oxford Peace Pledge in the 1930s can now be seen as a help to Hitler and an encouragement to Nazi aggression, are not the lessons convincingly relevant to

[1] Ronald Clark, *Bertrand Russell & His World* (1981), p. 110.

[2] She eloquently denied having "run away", leaving the movement (and mankind) in the lurch. It was really and truly a gesture to save the future: at least *she* might survive "the day after." But war never came; she returned to London.

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the West's collective security against militant men of the Kremlin?

The second is post-War. If Western arms, including nuclear weapons, have kept a balance of power and thus maintained the European peace for almost 40 years, would it not be foolhardy to upset that stabilising balance and create a dangerous power vacuum which might lead to unilateral intimidation and aggrandisement?

E. P. Thompson's performance is impressive in many respects. No other public figure has recently pamphleteered with such dedication and vigour or set out so indefatigably on "the Long March" through the editorial columns and letters pages in the service of his cause. As a result the complete *oeuvre* of essays, pamphlets, and leader-page articles is prodigious. "One of E. P. Thompson's virtues", as Christopher Mayhew has said, "is that he states his position so clearly and honestly" (*The Guardian*, 11 December 1982). It is very possible that had Lord Mayhew read all of it, his opinion of Thompson's candour would differ from the one quoted . . . unless clarity be understood as clearly arguing several different and mutually exclusive positions, and honesty be taken to be a frank acknowledgement of the strategy of using any stick to beat an opponent.

Nevertheless, E. P. Thompson does enjoy a reputation for being the one member of the Unilateralist Disarmament leadership who combines passion with intellectual vigour and candour. The reputation depends in part on his prior reputation as Marxist historian. His most celebrated work, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), displays a diligent, if selective, regard for the facts as perceived from the perspective of a Utopian Marxist; and it contains quite enough footnotes to convince even the most pedantic reader that he is a stickler for academic detail and recondite accuracy (the notion still being widespread that Marxism is associated with scrupulous scientific social research). Thus his work as an historian, now almost totally put aside in favour of "peace working", as he calls it, inevitably lends academic respectability to his work as campaigner and polemicist. A superficial resemblance to Bertrand Russell (partly a matter of silver-haired appearance), the way in which he preserves a distance from his Unilateralist colleagues commensurate with his status as an eminent intellectual (note the invariable use of sober initials before his surname in contrast to the abbreviated chumminess of the Jims, Ricks, Chrises, Sallys and Bruces), plus the column-inches prolifically clocked up in respectable newspapers and journals, have also contributed to the image of a scholarly and intellectually forthright man who, through reasons of pure principle and noble conviction, happens to find himself at the forefront of a protest movement.[3]

In a recent letter to *The Times* (28 October 1982) which Thompson wrote with his peace-working wife Dorothy, he said

> "In these very difficult times it is necessary to establish facts with care."

A careful reading of Thompson's pamphlets and journalism, however, suggests that this is an imperative which Thompson himself does not always recognise. He is *not* invariably candid or clear, nor do his assertions always enjoy a solid basis of indisputable fact. Despite his historian's experience of assiduously collecting and presenting empirical material, he is often careless and frequently ignores awkward or inconvenient facts. He is sometimes slippery and evasive, and does not apologise or, indeed, show a scintilla of intellectual humility when caught out. His polemical armoury includes techniques which would be regarded as questionable even if employed by a Party politician and, despite his professed dislike of personalising issues ("I'm sick to hell of the personalisation of politics", *The Times*, 3 August 1981), he has personalised them himself, not infrequently attributing most unpleasant motives to his opponents.

So, the truth about E. P. Thompson's approach to the facts may be "more nuanced" (to use a phrase of Thompson's which recently drove Bernard Levin to a state of near apoplexy) than Christopher Mayhew realised. The following footnotes, intended as a contribution to an assessment of just how "nuanced" that truth may be, prompts the thought that if E. P. Thompson, with his considerable facility for words, his intellectual gifts, and his reputation, cannot make a plausible case for Unilateralism without such lapses, the cause to which he is publicly pledged must be even weaker than one supposed.

1. *The Uses of the Memory Hole*

THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE in the columns of *The Times* provides a striking example of E. P. Thompson's special talents for evasiveness and inconsistency. Replying to a *Times* editorial (29 November 1982) which asserted that Thompson regarded CND as a useful instrument in the "socialization of Britain", Thompson demanded to know (3 December 1982) "where and when I have said any such thing", the strong implication being that he had never uttered, and possibly never ever held, sentiments of that kind. A diligent *Times* reader, Mr John Barry, to whose labours Thompson subsequently paid sarcastic tribute, duly obliged by pointing out (9 December 1982) that Thompson had said exactly that in an article in the Summer 1959 edition of *The New Reasoner*, later reprinted in an anthology of essays, *Voices from the Crowd* (Peter Owen, 1964). The essay contains the following passage:

> ". . . the young people who marched from Aldermaston and who are beginning in many ways to associate themselves with the socialist movement are the first symptoms of a self-activating specialist youth movement. . . ."

It goes on:

> "The watershed of the October revolution cannot be argued away and we believe that, in an atmosphere of relaxed international tension, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe will prove to be the area of expanding liberty and human fulfilment, whereas the West, unless transformed by a strong democratic and revolutionary socialist movement will prove to be the area of encroaching authoritarianism. . . .

[3] Such factors may also help explain why he is so frequently and erroneously referred to as "Professor" Thompson, even by *The Times* in London and by a former UK Secretary of State for Defence, when in fact he has never held a British university chair and has not held a full-time teaching post for many years.

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> The assertion of democracy in the Communist area cannot take place without a hundred contests with the entrenched bureaucracy, its institutions, and ideology. And equally the regeneration of the Western socialist movement cannot take place without a fundamental break with the policies and orthodoxies of the past decade."

In his reply to John Barry (15 December 1982), Thompson merely asserted that he had written these words a long time ago when he was somewhat more optimistic about the state of the world; those who wanted to know his present views could consult his more recent writings.

Connoisseurs of the E. P. Thompson *oeuvre* will be interested to note:

(*1*) the surprising lapse of memory on the part of a professional historian in relation to what was obviously once (and still may be) a central element in his approach to politics. Moreover, how long is "a long time ago" for an historian?

(*2*) the total lack of anything resembling an apology;

(*3*) the fact that neither in his original letter nor his subsequent one did he say whether he still regards Unilateralism as a means to creating a Socialist Britain. Dr Thompson's CND colleagues—especially, among others, the Quakers and the non-Socialists in the Unilateralist ranks—surely have a right to know.

It should be borne in mind that, if a former school friend (Professor Antony Flew) is to be believed, Dr Thompson is quickwitted and not "any sort of fool."[4] He would be expected to recognise that to admit regarding the "Peace Movement" as a Socialist vanguard of a resurgent new Left would be tactically rather foolish and, possibly, in the context of building a broad popular front, disastrous.

2. *Their Motives & Ours*

E. P. Thompson's attribution of unpleasant motives to opponents is a not infrequent polemical habit. This is how he replied to Timothy Garton Ash, who had been critical of him in *The Spectator*:

> "What puzzles me most is why writers of your ideological persuasion so ardently wish movements of self-liberation, or indeed independent peace movements in the East, to fail." (*Spectator*, 30 October, 1982)

Yet only three paragraphs earlier Thompson had conceded:

> "I will allow that you do care in earnest about civil and trade union rights and that you are as anxious about Poland's and Solidarity's future as I am now."

It is perhaps worth making the fairly obvious point that to rule out as improbable, or most unlikely, the emergence of a truly independent "peace" or liberation movement in Eastern Europe in no way implies a wish to see such movements fail. For Thompson to attribute such a sentiment is intellectually unjustified and morally disreputable. In any event the two sentences quoted above cannot both be true. One of them is false; and, unless Thompson underwent some kind of intellectual conversion in the space of 150 words, one of them—probably the latter—is less than candid.

[4] See Antony Flew, "Draper's Thompson", Letters, Encounter, August 1982, p. 95.

3. *Friend or Foe*

Even more reprehensible was Thompson's treatment of Oleg Popov, a Soviet dissident who acted as a legal adviser to a Russian peace group before becoming a political exile in the West. In a letter to *The Times* (8 November 1982) and in a BBC interview the same day, Dr Popov was deeply critical of Western Unilateral Disarmers for exploiting his colleagues in the Russian peace movement for their own interests. Popov described Thompson's approach to disarmament issues as "confused, misguided, and potentially dangerous. . . ."

Replying to Popov's letter with an *op-ed* article co-authored with his wife (*The Times*, 17 November 1982), Thompson wrote:

> "It is distasteful to have to question Dr. Popov's credentials, not as a libertarian but as the voice of this group. Our information is this: he is not and has not been a member of the group."

Thompson went on to cast doubts on the links between Dr Popov and the Soviet peace group, although he conceded that Popov had acted as a legal adviser. In fact, neither in his letter to *The Times* nor in the BBC interview (as the transcript of the programme makes clear) did Dr Popov claim to have been "a member." He described himself as an adviser, and added that since arriving in the West he had been acting as the group's spokesman.

However, the Thompsons' opening assertion is true enough. It *is* "distasteful" to question the credentials of a brave man who had expressed opposition to Soviet policies, who had been harassed by the authorities, been threatened with criminal proceedings, and seen a number of his friends sent to jail.

4. *Monolithic Dialogue*

In the same article E. P. Thompson and his wife criticise the Soviets for their repressive attitude towards the Russian peace group, and add:

> "But there are some mist makers in the West as well. Dr. Popov's visit took place under the auspices of the Coalition for Peace Through Security. We will not inquire too closely into this coalition's credentials, except to note that it is a (well-funded) office and not a movement. . . ."

Popov, he continued, appeared to have been briefed by this organisation.

The symmetrical juxtaposition of the Soviet authorities with the tiny Coalition for Peace Through Security (which has only two full-time employees) is absurd. But in fact, as a subsequent letter to *The Times* made clear (John Macdonald, QC, 22 November 1982), Dr Popov's visit was not organised by the Coalition for Peace Through Security at all. Dr Popov had come to this country to help Mr Macdonald prepare the defence of Mrs Sofia Kalistratova, a 75-year-old Moscow

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lawyer, against charges of "slandering the Soviet state." Moreover, Dr Popov was never briefed by the Coalition for Peace Through Security; and he had never had any contact with it until it offered to provide him with a platform to air a deeply-held belief: namely, that Western "unilateralism" is a dangerous folly.

Thus, in addition to attributing to Popov a claim he never made, the Thompsons also falsely represented the circumstances of his visit.

Their purpose in casting doubts about the credentials of the Coalition for Peace Through Security, in referring to its funds, and in exaggerating the closeness of the relationship between it and Dr Popov is clear. The blame-by-amalgam technique is more deftly and lightly used than by the late Senator Joe McCarthy, but it is still recognisable as that of implying guilt-by-association.

The criticism of Popov also reveals a glaring inconsistency on the part of the Thompsons. They constantly emphasise the need for a "genuine dialogue" between the "peace groups" of the two blocs. But on one of the relatively few occasions when a Soviet dissident who had close links with a Moscow peace group is able to talk freely about the issues without fear of harassment, arrest, or physical assault, Dorothy and Edward Thompson—privileged members of a free and open society, enjoying democratic rights—promptly denigrate him. Does Dr Thompson seek "genuine dialogue"—or only an echo of his own views which could lend credibility to Unilateralist propaganda in the West?

5. *Numbers, Plus & Minus*

I HAVE REFERRED TO E. P. Thompson's intellectual inconsistency. Here are some examples:

(*1*) If it is argued that the Soviet Union has achieved a measurable degree of superiority in this or that area of weaponry, E. P. Thompson sometimes replies that he does not wish to get involved in the "numbers game" (see *The Guardian*, 30 November 1982). Different measurements of nuclear systems do indeed give appreciably different results. But if one takes this perfectly legitimate approach to the subject one must then be governed by one's own edict. He is not. Commenting on the Reagan "Zero Option" proposals in the same issue of *The Guardian* he writes that:

> ". . . a nil option would take the Soviet Union not back to square one but to a minus figure (in balance), in exchange for the withdrawal of what is not now here and is not ever likely to come."

Despite the obscurity of his prose it is evident that Thompson has indeed, when it suits him, been playing the "numbers game."

(2) In a letter to *The Times* (6 March 1981), Thompson wrote:

> "If European NATO states should reject cruise missiles and Pershing IIs—and if the Soviet Union did not instantly halt and then reduce its deployment we can be sure that the Western unilateralist movements would at once lose their popular support."

Monsignor Kent's Gospel

"The small minority of Communists in positions of influence recognise that, for CND to have any credibility with British opinion, it has got to hold on to people like him."

THE OBSERVER, *Profile of Monsignor Bruce Kent*

IT'S A FUNNY THING *that the small minority in question didn't also recognise that, for CND to have any credibility with British public opinion, the British Communist Party have got not to be* **seen** *to hold on to people like Monsignor Bruce Kent. . . .*

I suspect that they (or some of them) do recognise it, and would have advised against, but were not consulted when Bruce Kent decided to address the Thirty-eighth Congress of the British Communist Party. I think he went along simply to thank them because they have worked jolly hard for CND, as indeed they have. The thought that their motives, in working for CND, might be a bit one-sided seems to have occurred to him, but to have been stifled. He has referred to the British Communist Party's support for **Solidarity**, *and to condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. These expressions of opinion seem to have convinced him that the British Communist Party cannot be serving the interests of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, ultimate controller of almost all the nuclear weaponry which is out of range of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, as of any other movement of dissent and protest.*

MONSIGNOR KENT'S **inference is daring and optimistic: characteristically so, on both. A more parsimonious hypothesis about the relation of the Kremlin to the Western Communist parties would run something like this.**

The Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 transformed the appearance, and part of the substance, of this relationship. Khrushchev's revelations at that Congress were savagely humiliating to the leaders and members of the Western Communist Parties. They were told (in effect) that, for a quarter-of-a-century, they had been parroting every lying slogan dictated to them by a despot. And they were told this on precisely the same institutional authority as that for whose sake they had done that parroting.

Those revelations and the political turmoil which followed them, both in the Soviet Union and in the West, resulted in a new freedom for the Western parties. These are now free, as never in Stalin's day, to criticise particular actions of the Soviet leadership of the day. But the existence of this freedom does not mean that their basic character has radically altered. They still see the Soviet Union and its satellites as "the socialist countries." They still see capitalism as the dominant feature of the Western world. And they see it as their duty to hurry on the downfall of capitalism, and to prevent the decaying capitalism from attacking the socialist countries.

CND FITS IN *perfectly well with all that (and also with "raising consciousness", "sharpening contradictions" and so on). The fact that CND's tendency is to leave the West relatively weaker, and the Soviet Union relatively stronger, is not an argument against CND in the eyes of the Western Communists. It is an argument in its favour. No wonder they work so hard.*

Since I think that is roughly the way things are, I also think Bruce Kent's address to the Communist Party was a mistake. But the idea of a mistake is not likely to worry him, or most of his colleagues in CND. He is a holy man, appropriately heading a holy movement, and holy people are determined to do what they think is right, and leave the rest to God. As in the Children's Crusade.

Conor Cruise O'Brien
in THE OBSERVER (*London*)

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But when the US President later proposed to abandon plans for those rearmament proposals as part of the "Zero Option", Thompson described the Reagan offer as "grossly one-sided" and "a threat also since they block effective bargaining. . . ." In the same article he makes it clear that he and the other members of END (European Nuclear Disarmament) will block the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II "whatever happens." What happened between March and December 1981—as Julian Lewis and Edward Leigh of the National Council for Civil Defence correctly pointed out (*Guardian* letters, 7 December 1981)—was that Thompson had simply upped the ante.

The CND rank-and-file dutifully followed Thompson's example: the slogans which once anticipated Reagan's offer by demanding "NO CRUISE, NO SS-20s"—a regular feature at CND demonstrations—disappeared overnight.

6. *Persuasion by Evasion*

E. P. THOMPSON'S "evasiveness" has prompted a deserved rebuke from Sir John Hackett in a letter to *The Times* (16 December 1981) and another from a correspondent to *The Guardian*, who also complained about Thompson's "slipperiness" (*The Guardian*, 7 December 1981).

An example of evasiveness. Speaking in a debate with Ray Whitney, the Conservative MP, in High Wycombe in December 1981—I was in the audience—Dr Thompson answered a question from the floor about the trustworthiness of the Soviet Union by saying that we had after all been able to work with the Soviet Union throughout the last War.

At this stage a heckler who was standing near the front of the hall shouted very audibly: "What about the Nazi-Soviet Pact?"

But Thompson, distinguished historian and latter-day champion of human rights in Eastern Europe, simply ignored the event which paved the way for the devastation and enslavement of Eastern and Central Europe and the deaths of millions. Vorkuta and Karaganda were filled with, among others, simple trusting souls. Nothing is so sure of frustration as the faith of those who persistently refuse to put to themselves the difficult questions.

7. *Facts & Fantasies*

THOMPSON'S CARELESSNESS with language and his willingness to indulge in extraordinary flights of hyperbole reached new heights during the Falklands crisis. Returning to Britain from a holiday abroad after the British invasion force had set off (but before the main islands had been retaken), he wrote in *The Times* (29 April 1982):

> "By what right has either *junta* to put these young lives at risk in those fierce seas?"

Referring to the decision to despatch the Task Force, he wrote:

> "We shall pay for it for a long time in rapes and muggings in our cities. . . ."

And in the same article he attributed Prime Minister Thatcher's decision to take action to the most cynical and irresponsible of all possible motives:

> "Her administration has lost a by-election in Glasgow and it needs to sink the Argentine navy in revenge."

Thompson also forecast that the action would result in nemesis for Britain and that, even if temporarily successful in regaining the islands (a doubtful outcome, in his view), NATO had new and somewhat dubious plans for the Falkland Islands' future use which, he said, the inhabitants would not find congenial.

One does not have to be a supporter of Mrs Thatcher or indeed of Britain's Falklands action to acknowledge that the present Government is not a *junta*, or to accept that the Hillhead by-election defeat was unlikely to have weighed heavily with it when the decision to despatch the Task Force was taken.[5] Nor, of course, is there any evidence of a resultant increase in rapes and muggings or social disorder. By paying attention to rather more empirical evidence, several commentators pointed to a remarkable feeling of social cohesion during the period of the crisis, and even some temporarily improved behaviour of bands of British soccer fans when accompanying their teams to matches abroad. Nemesis has not so far descended, either on Mrs Thatcher or Britain, and, unremarkably, NATO (whose field of activities is in any case limited by charter to Europe and the North Atlantic) has not so far announced sinister plans for islands 6,000 miles away in the South Atlantic. Nor, equally unremarkably, has Dr Thompson publicly modified, retracted, or qualified his views.

8. *Quantifying Without Qualifying*

ON AT LEAST TWO occasions E. P. Thompson has made claims which on his own admission he knew to be far from the truth, and after which he offered only partial and rather mealy-mouthed qualifications. In a surrealistic passage Thompson described (*The Guardian*, 23 February 1981) the destabilising effect on him of watching NATO General Bernard Rogers make the case for the neutron bomb on television:

> ". . . the stench of those megadeaths, only a little ahead of us in the future, is beginning to drift back into our present time. We begin to rise from our seats in the European theatre and make for the exits. But each time we try to move, in Western Europe the exits are blocked by those monstrous SS-20s. (Have you noticed, incidentally, how they multiply, if not on the ground, then certainly in the Western official handouts?)
>
> And multiplying perhaps they are."

He was right the first time: even if one uses Soviet statistics they are indeed multiplying, on Eastern bases and not merely in Western estimates. According to the usually reliable IISS (London's International Institute for Strategic Studies), there are some 360 *SS-20*s, each of them carrying three indepen-

[5] If indeed Dr Thompson was correct in his analysis of Mrs Thatcher's motives, one might possibly conclude that, since the Tories regularly lose by-elections in Scotland, few spots on earth are safe from raids of vengeance while the "Iron Maiden" rules.

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dently directed warheads, and three-quarters of them currently targeted on Europe. There is therefore no "*perhaps*" about the deployment of the weapon—and how much seriousness or simple sincerity is there in an argument which implies that the estimate of its growth, checked and double-checked independently by all the European Intelligence services, may be even partly a matter of Western fantasy or fabrication?

9. *Paying Words Extra*

THE SAME transparent technique is used when E. P. Thompson describes an exchange with Jody Powell (President Carter's former press secretary) in a radio programme during which the latter pointed out that the American troops stationed in Europe first arrived as forces of liberation. Thompson wrote (*The Guardian*, 23 February 1982):

> "Mr Powell supposed that he had knocked me to the ground without any possible reply. But then as is the custom on American radio, there was a commercial break to advertise deodorants, cookies and Kleenex tissues with little bits of pop music and I had time to think of an answer; when he came back on the air I told him that however generous an act of liberation it did not bring with it the right to perpetual occupation and that as it happens I had myself taken part in the war of liberation—but I did not for that reason wish to occupy Italy today."

Just for good measure, Thompson then repeats the word "*occupation*" several times.

Several paragraphs later he concedes that American forces are part of an "abnormal and unresolved state of affairs", and not actually forces of occupation at all. Why, then, does a man of academic standing deliberately aver that they are, several times over, unless it is to give cheap and fast currency to a gross distortion of the facts?

If he wants to make his words mean so many different things he will have to get around to paying them overtime.

10. *Theory & Practice*

NOR DO E. P. Thompson's descriptions of his own personal political views strike one as exactly models of candour. A former Communist (he resigned following the 1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary), he continued until recently to describe himself as a Marxist. In a reply to an earlier article on Marxists within the Labour Party by Conor Cruise O'Brien, Thompson identifies himself as one such—referring to "Marxists like myself" (*The Observer*, 4 February 1979). Elsewhere in the article he writes: "As a Marxist (or a Marxist fragment) . . . ."

But asked by Paul Hoggart in an interview in *The Times* (3 August 1981) to say in what sense he considers himself to be a Marxist, Thompson simply replied, "I don't." He went on to explain to the interviewer that when he hears a disquisition on Marxism he feels himself to be against it as a creed; but he "doesn't mind" being called "a Marxist historian."[6]

We are therefore left in some doubt as to whether Thompson modified or changed his political and philosophical views between 1979 and 1981, or whether he merely changed the sewn-on political labels. In any case, rarely has there been such a dialectical gap between theory and practice in Marxist chronicles; and this from a man who reproved Leszek Kolakowski for ideological inconsistencies and political confusions.[7]

Peter Cadogan's charges against the Marxist Left have already been cited—and he had been a veteran of CND and a chairman of the "Committee of 100." E. P. Thompson finds it convenient to believe that any charge of "manipulation" in the Peace Movement on the part of the active Communist minority is a baseless charge concocted in reactionary circles. Yet honest pacifists have long been troubled by the chronically *agitprop* tactics of some of their fellow Peace-fighters.

11. *Marx & Modesty*

IT IS ALSO very difficult to accept as completely accurate E. P. Thompson's description of the activists in the Unilateralist Disarmament movement. He refers to those who, like himself, are labouring at the "coal-face" of the peace movement. If so, then it is a centrally heated, wall-to-wall carpeted coal-face, all mod. con., in comparison to that at which Dr Popov's former associates toil, since the former permits the opportunity to compose commissioned articles for *The Times* and other London (and New York) newspapers, and to appear and speak freely on TV and radio. Thompson writes (*The Guardian*, 6 December 1982) that:

> ". . . . we are nearly all of us private persons who never had ambitions to be projected on to a vast public stage. . . . We had never supposed that we would become the subjects of daily editorial comment. . . . We have only one asset: the immensity of our numbers."

Does he, then, abhor the fame which his thrusting public career has achieved? Never was a leader of the masses so modest. If only the prize of peace could be won privately! One wonders whether Marx would have liked his Marxists to be quite so prim and self-effacing. And yet, as one of his friends has reported, "He doesn't just want to write history—he wants to make it" (Professor J. F. C. Harrison, quoted in *The Times*, 3 August 1981).

It may well be that some of his colleagues back at the "coal-face" are intensely private, unworldly individuals who shun the limelight. But it is also evident that many are not. A considerable number are active in the Labour Party or in the Communist Party (even a few in both). Several are well-known trade-union organisers or officials; some of them have been active in CND since its inception. Even the clerics among them have high political profiles, and not a few are engaged openly in politics.

For certain obvious reasons, E. P. Thompson wishes to give the impression of a very large but apolitical movement which is

[6] Remarking on Thompson's "startling honesty" (a curious description offered by one of Thompson's former colleagues), Hoggart reports that Thompson inherited "a cult of honesty" from his father.

[7] E. P. Thompson, *The Socialist Register*, 1973; see also Leszek Kolakowski's reply, "My Correct Views on Everything" (ENCOUNTER, June 1975).

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only concerned with disarmament issues. Not, that is to say, with Socialism, Capitalism, Communism, Marxism, and the like. As is often the case with Thompson's statements, the truth is considerably more "nuanced" than that.

12. *Dupes & Flops*

E. P. THOMPSON's response when the Russian Peace Group's leader, Sergei Batovrin, and his wife Natasha were exiled to the West (in May 1983) was wholly different from the embarrassments of Oleg Popov. He rushed immediately to see Batovrin, bearing a gift and claiming him instantly as a friend. Did E. P. Thompson perhaps hope that Sergei Batovrin would come to support the common cause? But peace-fighters in the East seem to have their serious differences with their peace-fighting friends in the West. Thompson writes:

> "When Dorothy and I heard of the Batovrins' arrival we got ourselves tickets to Vienna. It was a daft thing to do, and the most expensive day-trip of our lives, but it was a matter of impulse and not of thought at all. Our purpose was simply to take Natasha a bunch of English flowers. When your brothers and sisters have been suffering in that way, and for the same cause, it seemed right that someone from our own peace movement should go and say thank you and hello. . . ."
>
> (*The Defence of Britain*, June 1983, published jointly by CND and END)

Overflowing with admiration and respect for his comrade and new friend, Thompson commends Sergei Batovrin for his admirable reticence in declining to provide "good Cold War copy" to waiting reporters. But all this is reported in the 1983 election-campaign polemic quoted above. So Batovrin was used to provide "good copy" after all—if not for the newspapers, then for CND literature.

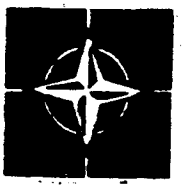
Quite free from any irony, Thompson writes: "Sergei will be writing himself about his experiences and his Group's ideas. I will leave this to him." But he doesn't. Indeed, he even goes on to list the things that Batovrin did not say:

> "He did not call upon the West to build even bigger weapons, nor did he ask for boycotts, nor did he accuse Western peace workers of being useful dupes of the Kremlin, and he did not even ask us to help his people by ordering Cruise missiles. In short, the Western media found him to be a flop—an ordinary sort of person, rather like those people camping at Upper Heyford or Greenham Common. . . ."

His account of his meeting in Vienna with Batovrin is interspersed with comments of his own about how reckless "cold war posturing" in the West is "making it worse over there"; and he goes on:

> "I put to Sergei the question. . . . If Britain were to initiate disarmament, would there be a Soviet response? He did not

Peace: The Vital Factors . . .



LORD ISMAY, NATO'S **first secretary general, once described the object of the alliance as being to keep the Americans in, the Soviets out, and the Germans down. For a third of a century it has been successful in these objectives except, fortunately, the third.**

The Germans have not been kept down but raised up; raised up, indeed, so successfully that today the younger generation finds it hard to understand that there was ever a German problem at all. The Soviets have certainly been kept out; by military deterrence, without doubt, but even more by the development of societies so successful, both politically and economically, that the younger generation, even those of the extreme Left, find it even harder to understand why anyone in the West ever regarded the Soviet system as in any sense a competitor with their own. So far from extending its rule westward over Europe, the Soviets are finding it harder than ever to maintain their hold over the territories they overran in 1945.

Still, 35 years is a long time. The settlements after the Napoleonic wars and the German wars of unification lasted only 40-odd years, while the deeply flawed Versailles system collapsed after 20. All eventually ceased to reflect political realities or to contain irresistible new ambitions. When the existing order is no longer seen to express the real relationship of social and political forces, the chances are that someone will challenge or test its stability by the use of force. That is one way wars begin.

Have we reached such a position in Europe today?

Certainly much has changed in the course of a generation. For the United States, the Soviet Union is no longer seen just as a regional danger in Europe but as a global adversary, threatening the status quo all over the world. Western Europe's economic recovery, and its failure to achieve military unity, has, so far from strengthening the cohesion of the alliance, created nagging problems of burden-sharing within it. A generation in Europe which takes security for granted and cannot understand the role of military force in providing it expresses its frustrations in a fretful anti-Americanism which often seems the main driving force behind the peace movement, both in West Germany and here.

Finally, the economic and political problems within its empire have not prevented it from achieving and maintaining a position of military parity with the United States; a position which gives it greater confidence in its operations on the world scene, and would make all prospects of a purely conventional defence of Western Europe quite hopeless but for the continuing deterrent of the possibility of general nuclear war.

DOES ANY OF THIS **amount to the kind of seismic shift in social and political forces which destroys the underlying stability of the international order and places it at the mercy of crises and accidents? Have we moved, as is sometimes suggested, from a post-war into a pre-war era such as that of 1908–1914 or 1933–1939?**

Certainly the world outside Europe is profoundly unstable. No new order has yet developed to replace that imposed by the old European empires. But the conflicts outside Europe are unlikely to result in Armageddon unless the superpowers involve themselves and this will happen only if they are prepared to accept the appalling risks of nuclear confrontation. Whatever alarming quotations may be dug out of the strategic literature on both sides, there is no

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know. He could give no certain assurance. But if Britain were to halt Cruise missile deployment, the Soviet people would see that as 'an act of peace'. It might make more possible the real work, the work of establishing trust."

It is difficult to know what Sergei Batovrin made of the curious English polemicist bearing a posy of travel-weary flowers, eager to make friends and to hear his views on Cruise missiles before rushing away to write about it all in a General Election leaflet. But one gets a good idea of his views of the Peace Movement in the West from an interview given to an anti-Soviet, Russian-*émigré* journal (the November 1983 issue of *Possev*) in which Batovrin is quoted as saying:

> "Western pacifists . . . sincerely yearn for peace, but they do not understand the structure of Soviet society, and therefore often come to absurd conclusions which can lead to dangerous actions . . . . by virtue of the fact that they live under completely different conditions they cannot imagine that there exists another world in which unbelievable things are going on."

He continues:

> "It has never occurred to Western pacifists that a person who showed up near a Soviet military unit, even if he was holding a peace banner, could be killed in accordance with the law; that a train will not stop if there are demonstrators lying across the tracks; that a group of demonstrators in a square will be arrested in a matter of minutes. . . . "

Batovrin—whose views turn out to be most unlike those of the Greenham Common protestors—goes on to describe the Peace Movement as "an important ally of the USSR, considerably more dependable than the Western Communist Parties."

What Thompson has chronic difficulty in grasping is the basic asymmetry of his attitudes toward the West and the East. If a public figure in the West—say, ex-"Viet Nam" Defence Minister Robert McNamara—criticises American policies as "*warlike*", he becomes an instant hero in the CND pantheon. If a poor harassed "peace fighter" in the East—say, Oleg Popov—criticises Soviet policies as "*warlike*", he becomes an instant renegade and is coldly rejected by CND as one who allows himself to be used by "Cold War propaganda."

13. Double Talk on a Dual Track

THE IRONY and paradox of "fighters for peace"—aren't the seeds of conflict already in that phrase?—is that they are, more often than not, so militant and aggressive, indeed even warlike. In defence of his movement's strategy of "Direct Action", Thompson recently took issue with a *Times* leader which argued that the policy pointed to violence.

> "The logic of demonstrations points to violence if the spectacle of non-violent demonstration fails to change political decisions. That logic springs not from a belief by the

. . . *by Michael Howard*

indication that either the American or the Soviet leadership is prepared for anything of the kind.

AS FOR EUROPE, *in assessing the prospects for stability, we should look neither at the military balance not at the nature of the weapons themselves. This has been the fundamental error of the past decade: one shared equally by "The Committee on the Present Danger" in the United States and the* **Doppelganger** *it has conjured up on this side of the Atlantic, the European Peace Movement. We must look deeper for the things that really matter.*

CAN THE Soviet Union continue to control its East European empire? Will that control remain, indefinitely, and be politically acceptable to the West?

Can the Germans, East and West, incrementally develop a relationship which will not call in question the entire post-war settlement of the Continent?

Will the nations of Western Europe be reduced to ungovernability by the social discontent arising from their economic problems and thus once more constitute an attractive target for Soviet penetration?

And most important of all, will the United States continue to regard Western Europe as a region so vital to its own security that it will persist, in spite of all the frustrations and humiliations involved, in maintaining so complex an alliance?

FACTORS SUCH AS THESE *will determine whether the balance is stable or not: not SS20s, Pershing 2s or numbers of Soviet tanks. If the underlying political structure remains stable it will not be disturbed by weapons imbalances, or be at the mercy of crises, accidents and misperceptions. If it is not, then peace cannot be preserved either by anxiously matching weapon for weapon or by dramatic gestures of one-sided disarmament.*

PEACE IN EUROPE **is only likely to be threatened by a combination of three circumstances. First growing instability in Eastern Europe might drive a desperate Soviet Union to take the gamble of a** *fuite en avant***; much as the bleak prospects in the Balkans led the Central Powers in 1914 into the actions which precipitated the First World War.**

Second, growing instability and political divisions in Western Europe might make the Soviets believe they would run a negligible risk in taking the offensive.

And finally American impatience and disgust with their European allies might make the Soviets misread the signals, as they did so fatally at the time of Korea, and assume that the United States now regarded Western Europe as expendable.

THE FIRST *of these developments lies beyond our control, and we would be ill-advised to think otherwise. But it was to guard against the second and the third that* NATO *came into being, and for which it still exists. No doubt one day social and political forces beyond our control will make it impossible any longer to preserve the alliance, or better still, may make it unnecessary.*

But meanwhile, anyone seriously concerned with the preservation of peace should devote their best efforts to keeping the framework which has for so long made that peace possible in the best feasible state of repair. It is no less true today than it has been in the past: **if we do not hang together, we shall assuredly hang separately.**

Michael Howard
in THE TIMES (*London*)

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> protestors that they can literally prevent the missiles' operation by force, but because it is violent demonstration which attracts most publicity and it is publicity that they are after. Only with some extra publicity for a cause that has not prevailed through argument can they undermine the will-power of politicians. . . .We would all say yes to peace; it is how to achieve that, and maintain it, which requires a discipline and an application which seems to be lost on the demonstrators."
>
> (*The Times*, 17 October 1983)

No, Thompson insisted, the method of CND and END was that of "persuasion, rational advocacy, and every form of non-violent testimony" (*The Times*, 21 October 1983).

This would be a welcome sentiment, if it was a convincing one. There has, of course, already been violence to property; and the tradespeople of disrupted Newbury as well as the civilian personnel at the picketed US base at Greenham have been regularly obstructed and sometimes prevented from going about their normal working lives by "peace protestors." Every now and then in the Left's ideological discussions some kind of viable distinction is attempted to be made between "*hard*" and "*soft*" violence, between action against *persons* and action against *things*. (Here the German Left came a cropper in the militant demos after 1968 when the violence against a vehicle, a metallic thing if there ever was one, caused the death of a real, live person at the wheel. There is, of course, a real difference between battering a barbed-wire fence and bruising a person, and between personal assault and constraint by force of numbers. Since he constantly warns against the dangerous phenomenon of "escalation", Thompson might reasonably be expected to see how one thing can lead to another.

What of the prospect of non-violent counter-violence? As yet there is no discernible public back-lash, neither from anti-protest protestors nor from the patient police on patrol. Still, one tricky question obtrudes. If Thompson and his CND are granted the right to obstruct and restrain, should, would, and could *others* be permitted a *similar* entitlement? True to a certain old-fashioned bourgeois ideal of consistency, must not Thompson have to grant that right to those who believe that CND is a politically destabilising force? Many critics feel with strong moral passion that it is dangerously weakening our war-deterring Western defences and thus tempting potential aggressors to try their luck. Indeed they contend that it is an irresponsible form of thoughtless appeasement ("Chairman Chernenko is too old to fight, and Comrades Brezhnev and Andropov are dead"); and, in the final unbalance of power, a strong CND would be a culpable agency for the prompting of tensions, crises, and possible nuclear catastrophes. What, then, would be his reaction if a hundred concerned citizens prevented him from leaving his home in the Worcestershire countryside by means of a fence-to-fence "life-affirming human chain"? On what grounds would he protest—and to whom? The capitalist police and the bourgeois courts? What if his ally and colleague, Monsignor Bruce Kent, were to be trapped in a chapel at morning prayers and not allowed—by quite peaceful, if impassioned, direct-actionists—to come out into the light of day? In short, would he permit advocates of Deterrence, Containment, and Multilateral Disarmament to do their own "peace work" by preventing him from doing his? Or would he and his political friends (surely they include, as Monsignor Kent is now proud to admit, the peace-loving Communist Party) denounce them as "fascists", "militarists", and "warmongers", all in the pay of the notorious military-industrial complex—and insist on having them summarily removed?

Surely the truth of the matter is that a person who sits down in front of a police patrol or a lorry, or otherwise obstructs persons and traffic, is not exactly seeking "rational debate." He is seeking to draw attention to himself, usually in time for the evening TV-news bulletins. The tactic is part of a cool, if not cynical, public relations campaign; and the strategy is part of the undemocratic ideology which has increasingly gripped the desperadoes of the Left. "Life-affirming chains" in order to make Cruise or any other Western weapon inoperable can be a death-dealing blow to democratic institutions. The contempt for Parliament and its elected majority is pervasive. For are they not trying to reverse representative decisions about Britain's defence by conspicuously undemocratic means?

Raising as it does the temperature of public discourse, how can the whole campaign not contribute to ruling out just that possibility of "rational debate and discourse" that CND demands? Much in Western defence policy, whether European or American, can indeed be criticised, debated, improved, and put in a more realistic light by offering sensible alternatives. But "direct action" is clearly incompatible with the values of a free, pluralistic, and democratic society, with the ways and means of a peaceable social order.

E. P. Thompson's "dual-track" decision to try and combine such action outside the gates of Greenham with pious avowals of the need for "a great democratic debate"—this is either the tactics of hypocrisy or the politics of the absurd.

14. Sources for Courses

AN ERUDITE and cultivated man, E. P. Thompson is able to summon up a wide variety of scholars and pundits—from William Blake to Louis Mountbatten—to support his contentions. Does Blake's mystical verse truly exemplify the "deep structure of mutual fear" which Thompson believes has been produced by the Cold War? Let's leave that to the corps of deep structuralist critics. More relevantly, why is it that E. P. Thompson sees no obligation to give a full or accurate account of the views of those summoned in support of his arguments when they, inconveniently, conflict with his own?

For example, one might very well be led to believe that Lord Zuckerman, whose views on "preventing a war between the superpowers from quickly escalating" are frequently quoted, was an ardent supporter of unilateral disarmament. This is not, of course, the case. In a lecture from which Thompson has frequently quoted, Lord Zuckerman stated:

> "Given the existence of nuclear weapons—and no one supposes they are going to be swept away—the concept of mutual deterrence based upon an appreciation of their enormous destructiveness is valid and inescapable."

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He also noted: "I do not believe that any of us [the scientists who have pointed to the dangers] is so starry-eyed as to believe in unilateral disarmament."

There is here, doubtless, a desperate public relations deficiency. One of the practical problems faced by the Unilateralist movement in Britain is that it conspicuously lacks the support of the good and the great. True, E. P. Thompson and Monsignor Bruce Kent (the CND general secretary) are both now very well known—but they have shot to fame through their involvement in the Unilateralist cause. Statements by famous established public figures such as Lord Zuckerman and the late Lord Mountbatten, which appear to buttress the Unilateralist case, or some part of it, are of immense value. A good quote is a useful piece of black magic; reason appears to be coming to the aid of passion; unpopular arguments take on a certain authoritativeness.

The late Earl Mountbatten is, accordingly, a considerable favourite with Thompson. Yet, while Mountbatten shared Solly Zuckerman's views about the difficulty of preventing a local nuclear conflict from escalating into something more catastrophic, he also rejected Unilateralism. His speech to SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) in May 1979 made this clear:

> "We are most likely to preserve peace if there is a military balance of strength between East and West. The real need is for both sides to replace the attempts to maintain a balance through ever-increasing and ever more costly nuclear armaments by a balance based on mutual restraint. Better still, by reduction of nuclear disarmaments, I believe it should be possible to achieve greater security at a lower level of military confrontation."

If E. P. Thompson had indeed inherited a "cult of honesty", if he were truly the vaunted heir to fairness and objectivity, he might well have felt impelled to give rather a fuller and more accurate account of Lord Zuckerman's and Lord Mountbatten's views. But what, when good texts are so rare, is a little tearing-out-of-context among honest men?

15. *Of Lies & Liars*

FULL OF LIES, mendacity (a favourite word), and deceit—this is E. P. Thompson's contemptuous indictment of Western defence spokesmen and those "defence intellectuals" with a professional interest in studying disarmament issues. But he is rhetorically vague about the precise nature of the falsehoods being perpetrated on an evidently gullible public. He writes (*Protest and Survive*, p. 19):

> "The name of the game, on both sides, is mendacity. Indeed, 'deterrence' might itself be defined as the biggest and most expensive Lie in history; and it was, in effect, defined in this way by our Defence Secretary, Mr Pym, in the debate on 24 January 1980: 'Deterrence is primarily about what the other side thinks, not what we may think' . . . ."

In the speech to which Thompson refers, Mr Pym, the former British Defence Secretary, was drawing attention to the psychological aspect of deterrence by stressing that Soviet perceptions of Western intentions and capabilities may be even more crucial than the causes of those perceptions. He was not, of course, saying that the Western threats to repay Soviet aggression with massive retaliation or even flexible response were simply hollow, that it was just a matter of bluff. Pym did not, therefore, define deterrence as a massive lie, or say anything of the sort. But what if he had? It is surely worth noting that had the Defence Minister suggested that deterrence was just a matter of bluff, E. P. Thompson would have been most unlikely to agree with him. "Terminal destruction" is upon us.[8] Thompson, after all, believes that the Western threat to use the nuclear weapon is all too real and menacing, that nuclear war is not only possible but probable, and that the probability is increasing. And surely every man, woman, and child in the world would know it—if only they weren't being inundated by colossal and costly falsehoods.

What are these, and who is perpetrating them? On close inspection the passage quoted above appears to be merely the product of intellectual confusion associated with a personal dislike for the Western politicians of defence establishments. But since Thompson very frequently refers to deterrence as "mendacious" or a "big lie", he must presumably entertain some clearer notion as to what this lie might be.

In other passages and comments he appears to identify the lie with the claim that "deterrence has kept the peace." Writing with heavy sarcasm, Thompson says (*Protest and Survive*, p. 40):

> "'Deterrence' has plausibility. It has 'worked' for thirty years, if not in Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, the Middle East, Africa, Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, Afghanistan, then in the central fracture between the superpowers which runs across Europe. It may have inhibited, in Europe, a major 'conventional' war.
>
> But it has not worked as a stationary state. The weapons for adequate 'deterrence' already existed thirty years ago, and, as the Pope reminded us in his New Year's Message for 1980, only 200 of the 50,000 nuclear weapons now estimated to be in existence would be enough to destroy the world's major cities."

Thus, like many of his Unilateralist colleagues, he claims that deterrence has resulted in "the export of war" to Third World countries. Afro-Asians are hapless victims of Superpower belligerence—or, at the very least the West has done practically nothing to prevent wars in "far-away places."

But we are still not at the heart of the darkness, that awful lie which Thompson is so desperately anxious to refute. No US President or Defense Secretary, and indeed no sensible intellectual supporter of the deterrence theory, has argued that the possession of nuclear weapons by the Superpowers would prevent wars *in general*. As a matter of fact, not a few Western defence analysts have frankly conceded that the emergence of the nuclear Superpowers made "proxy wars" more likely,

[8] Unless, that is, there is "a total transformation of world politics" (*The Times*, 31 March 1983). The all-or-nothing, paradise-or-doom alternatives are not very common among English intellectuals, but the inspiration appears to go back to that 17th-century apocalyptic temperament which made the Cromwellian conflicts so fundamentalistic.

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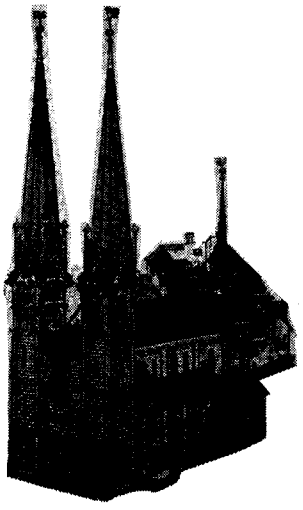
and in certain respects even "desirable", since they tended to prevent the Superpowers from coming into a direct World-War-like conflict.

Nor (to use Thompson's phrase) has deterrence been depicted as a "stationary state." Successive White Papers, and a stream of other official documents from Western governments, have made it clear that nuclear weapons, like all other weapons, have a finite life and would ultimately have to be replaced, either because of wear-and-tear (as in the case of Polaris) or because they had been rendered obsolete by technological innovation or changes. No one promised Thompson, or indeed the general public, that deterrence would be maintained on the basis of the weapons systems developed in the 1950s and '60s (although, looking back over the post-War period, it seems remarkable how few major technological revolutions in weapons systems have actually taken place). On closer examination some of Thompson's principal targets seem to turn out to be no more substantial than straw men, fashioned to Thompson's peculiar design out of half-truths, misperceptions, and selective quotations. Men of straw may make convenient targets, but even then E. P. Thompson's aim would seem to be far from accurate. He has been demonstrably wide of the mark.

16. *Reflecting in a Concave Mirror*

ONE OF THOMPSON'S most central contentions has come to be the claim that the two Superpowers are "ideological look-alikes" between whom it is morally and ideo-

In Search of a "Just Deterrent"



THE AVOIDANCE OF WAR *is primarily a political matter. Unfortunately, the General Synod of the Church of England on the further deployment of cruise missiles, will reinforce the impression given by the Peace Movements that wars are caused by the existence of weapons systems. But Canada does not feel threatened by United States missiles. We British do not go in fear because of the French nuclear force. The establishment of peace depends on political initiatives, sustained over a long period of time, and the gradual adjustment to new conditions. What then should the Synod be saying?*

First, it should be encouraging a longer perspective. The two Superpowers have an almost infinite capacity to destroy each other. Neither power is going to divest itself of its weapons; neither is going to collapse; neither is going to change its ideology. This means the present stalemate will continue for as long as we can foresee. "We think in centuries here", they say at the Vatican.

IT IS *a useful perspective. Europe had to live with the Turkish threat for centuries. The church should counter the present hysteria and impart some of its traditional wisdom: that most problems in life cannot be solved. They have to be lived with, calmly, courageously and constructively.*

Eventually Roman Catholics and Protestants adjusted to the need to live peacefully together in Europe. Eventually the two Superpowers will have to adjust to living together on the same planet. Meanwhile, there is the overriding priority of avoiding nuclear war, which both acknowledge.

Second, the church should remind people that if they are sincere about wanting to become less dependent on nuclear weapons it may cost more. A declaratory policy of "No first use", which the last Synod voted in favour of, is dangerous nonsense. An actual policy, however, is highly desirable and one on which all churches could unite. Now, for the first time, because of the new precision-guided weapons, this is a real possibility. But will the church point out that if we want to raise the nuclear threshold we will have to pay for it?

Third, it should remind people that in a world in which there will always be conflict, always one crisis following another, what matters is having the mechanisms ready and working to cope with them. The present preoccupation with weapons systems not only distracts people from the prime political task which has to be performed but stops people asking about these really vital matters.

AT ITS MOST BASIC, *are the hot lines working? What procedures, if any, have the superpowers agreed on to cope with the next crisis when it comes? There seemed to be little in the way of agreed procedures at the time of the shooting down of the Korean airliner. It is the old, old story of people being seduced by an illusory ideal (in our case the idea of a world free of the risk of nuclear war) so that they fail to take the basic and essential steps for minimizing the risk of war in the world in which we actually live.*

ALL THESE THREE POINTS *are unpalatable or unfashionable on the high moral ground on which the church likes to sit. All the more reason for the church to make them.*

Does this mean the church should say nothing about particular weapons systems? All it needs to say is implied in the motion that Synod voted in favour of last year. The first part of the Bishop of Birmingham's amendment said:

> **"It is the duty of H.M. Government and her allies to maintain adequate forces to guard against nuclear blackmail and to deter potential nuclear and non-nuclear aggressors."**

A key word here is "adequate". By this the Bishop was pointing to a minimal deterrence and by doing so he stands firmly in the "just war" tradition. For as that tradition has justified recourse to force if absolutely necessary, so it has insisted that only that force which is strictly necessary may be used. As there is a theory of the just war, so there must now be a theory of the "just deterrent". One key principle is that only that force which is strictly necessary to deter (i.e., to inflict unacceptable damage) must be deployed.

The church has no special competence to pronounce on particular weapons systems. It does have a duty to urge the Government only to deploy the minimum necessary: and this minimum is to some extent independent of what the Soviet Union may or may not be deploying at a particular period.

Richard Harries

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His article appeared in *The Times* (London).

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logically impossible to choose. In every crisis in which the USA and the USSR are involved, he holds that the "military, security, and interventionist interests" enlarge their powers. As a result society acquires a heightened ideological resonance: Pentagon hawkishness breeds a corresponding Kremlin hawkishness. The inevitable consequence of this "process of deep irrationality", he concludes, is a war which will be more catastrophic, more destructive and horrible, than it is possible to imagine. (Still, a corps of "concerned doctors" and sympathetic film-makers will do their best to stimulate fear, horror, and even panic at the prospect of "The Day" and "The Day After.")

In describing this now "predictable" progression of action and reaction and of "mutually sustaining aggression", Thompson assumes a posture of world-weary impartiality. But not for very long. Speeches by Western leaders such as Mrs Thatcher or President Reagan (and even newspaper columns by journalists like Bernard Levin) which strongly criticise Soviet expansionism or the Soviet oppression of Eastern Europe are apt to drive Thompson into passionate tirades against Western "Cold Warriorship." The ferocity of these tirades is apparently heightened by the belief that a few impassioned words from the British Prime Minister, or even from Mr Levin, can provoke Red Army tanks to crush Poles or Czechs, or get dissidents incarcerated in psychiatric hospitals in Moscow. If one follows Thompson's logic, the causal chains of events which provoke Soviet behaviour—prison doors slammed in Moscow, Warsaw, or Prague; Red Army tanks rolling into Budapest or Kabul; chemical warfare used against Afghan hill tribesmen—almost invariably begin *not* in the Kremlin but in the White House, in Downing Street, or, more mysteriously, in the editorial offices of Fleet Street newspapers. Thus:

> "And what is, most of all, inducing this repression in the Soviet bloc? The near-hysteria, the anti-Soviet ideological rancour, of our own Western cold-warriors—and, behind them, the NATO planners who dream of a first disarming nuclear strike. These are the people who are fuelling Soviet paranoia and bringing comfort to the Soviet hawks. Every time Mrs Thatcher rants at the Soviet Union (or at CND) a prison door closes in Moscow or in Prague."
>
> (*The Guardian*, 21 February 1983)

More remarkable still, even for this soothsayer, is this flickering passage in *Writing by Candlelight* (1980):

> "On 12 December, at Brussels, NATO ratified its menacing plans in full. On 19 December, exactly one week later, the Soviet decision to enter Afghanistan was taken. The hawkism of the West directly generated the hawkism of the East—according to one account, Brezhnev was actually overruled by his own hawks. On the Cold War billiard-table, NATO played the Cruise missile ball, which struck the Afghan black, which rolled nicely into a Russian pocket. It was as if Mrs Thatcher, Mr Pym and Mr Bill Rodgers were there, perched on the leading Soviet tanks, waving to the astonished people of Kabul.
>
> There followed the heroics of the Cold War Olympics, with President Carter carrying a torch through Iowa and that remarkable athlete Bernard Levin—the gold medallist of every moral pentathlon—hop-skip-and-jumping in *The Times*. The white Olympic ball has been squarely struck, and is still rolling round the table; but it is Academician Sakharov who has rolled into a Soviet pouch. Not the KGB but President Carter and Mr Levin took him, one at each arm, and directed him to internal exile at Gorky."

Dizzy with metaphorical success, he offers us yet another conceit (p. 278):

> "It is, to change the metaphor, like a motorway pile-up in a fog. Soon some Western genius is going to come careering down in a ten-wheeler loaded with threats and sanctions against the Warsaw powers, and will crash into the back of Yugoslavia, which will be sent spinning into the opposite lane. And if the athletes of Westminster and Fleet Street try hard enough, perhaps they can get Roy Medvedev and the remnants of Charter 77 sent to gaol as well.
>
> Bravo for all this! We have seen it before. This logic of the Cold War has been manifest for decades—from at least 1956, when the Suez invasion immediately preceded, and licensed, the re-entry of Soviet tanks into Budapest."

Brimming with such scorn, contempt and sarcasm, he may yet do himself an injury. But "infamy" *must* be destroyed. Western leaders, especially the American ones, are variously described as "callow . . . provocative . . . boastful . . . arrogant . . . militaristic." The worst that Thompson can bring himself to say about the Soviets is that the poor chaps are paranoid (although, in Thompson's clinical view, not without fairly good cause). His description of the US "military-industrial complex" reflects a loathing far beyond the syndrome of sheer hatred. By contrast, Soviet society is compared to a university in which one department—in Thompson's metaphorics, the "Engineering department" stands for the military component in Soviet society—has outgrown all the others, pre-empting their resources in the process. No doubt a minor and corrigible academic misdemeanour.

But his scorn and his penchant for the vitriolic phrase quite desert him when he comes to describing Soviet military aggression or Bolshevik brutality. In fact, he appears at times to have difficulty taking Soviet aggression quite seriously (*The Guardian*, 28 January 1980):

> "Were it not for the fact that I have other pressing engagements, I would volunteer for the International Brigade in the Afghan mountains, where a horde of turbaned US senators and Fleet Street athletes are already serving alongside Pathan tribesmen. I am very much against sin, and especially against Russian sin. When the Russian state does not give me a pain in the head, it strikes my lower anatomy.
>
> Now that my moral credentials are plain to the whole world, let us discuss serious matters."

What happened, then, to the theory that Western and Communist societies are "*mirror images*" of one another? For in Thompson's final vision of the world it is *the West* which initiates conflicts and the Soviet Union which merely *reacts* to them.

To be sure, Soviet socialism has its "faults"—defects which on inspection turn out to have developed as a regrettable result of Western provocation or aggression—but these are clearly

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not very fundamental ones. American capitalism and US imperialism are, by contrast, not only more aggressive and militaristic than the Soviet Union; they are deeply and irrevocably flawed, morally, politically, and socially. Is this the philosopher of objective impartiality, aloof from the combative Superpowers?

17. The Prophet Motive

THERE ARE CRITICS who harbour a suspicion that E. P. Thompson's view of the world and its contemporary duel for power between the two Superpowers is distorted by some form of visceral anti-Americanism. So we find him on occasion assuring his listeners and readers that this is not the case at all. As if it proved the point beyond any shadow of a doubt, he cites the familial fact of his American mother. This genetic explanation figured in the televised debate in which he engaged US Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger at the Oxford Union (27 February).[9] He had come to argue that US foreign policy was no better, morally, than that of the Kremlin autocrats who tyrannise half a continent, and have practised racial persecution, torture, terror and genocide.

Thompson wanted the West European nations to give "notice to quit" to the US forces based on their soil and to get rid of Cruise and Pershing weapons; and that evidently had nothing to do with anti-Americanism either.

> "We owe it to America as well as ourselves to end this unnatural and unresolved situation [i.e. the post-War division of Europe] . . . .
>
> We will say goodbye to you with flowers and we will welcome you back as individuals to our universities and our homes with flowers—but it is time for you to go."

This was his message to the US Secretary for Defense. Speaking in the name of some vague undefined constituency, mostly concentrated in Trafalgar Square and Greenham Common (and formerly along the marching route to Aldermaston), he excommunicated the American ally but welcomed the Yankee tourist.

"Phallic Fallacy"

The cruise missile is a phallic symbol worshipped by men, the Labour MP for Pontypool, Mr Leo Abse, said in the Commons yesterday. Women protesting at Greenham Common Royal Air Force base were protecting family life, he added.

"They are the people who are affirming the family values in a way that combines all that is best within the modern feminist movement with all the traditional values [he said during a debate on family policy]. The Greenham Common protestors were demonstrating qualities women frequently showed—desire to nurse, nourish, care and tolerate, improve and preserve."

Men, he said, continued to demonstrate a set of values revolving round **machismo**—*"conquering space with phallic spaceships, and continuing to worship phallic missiles."*

THE GUARDIAN *(London)*

The Oxford style was the whole ideological man: heavy irony diluted by a calculated sentimentalism, arguable differences of opinion reinforced by a self-indulgent sense of moral superiority. He was merciless with such enemies of Peace and the People as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, Michael Heseltine, Capitalism, the Military-Industrial Complex, and the like. Into all of this intruded a prophetic, visionary mode of expression, for he thinks himself endowed not only with a special far-sightedness but also with a penetration which pierces through the ordinary but deceptive appearance of things and events. He is not for nothing the leading spokesman of a creed which is part of the great secular religion of our time. He feels called upon to prophesy events whose imminence is delusively belied by mere facts.

> "Below the level of the state there is a healing process taking place. . . . there is a gigantic geological upheaval of seismic proportions now going on which may heal and resolve this unresolved conflict."

This was his revelation to his Oxford audience. The millennial metaphorics were not new: upheavals that heal, storms that clear the air, earthquakes that quiet the earth, conflagrations that burn only to soothe.

As for the arguments from history they were, if anything, touchingly pro-American.

> "We are approaching just that moment in history that America was at 1776. Europe is ready for a Declaration of Independence."

How could anybody be thought of as "anti-American" who could find such inspiration in colonial, transatlantic history? George Washington would row—and Paul Revere ride—once again.

But was he seriously contending, as he said with some emphasis, that *that* was "the solution to all those missiles"? Yes, the healing of an afflicted Continent depended on the cauterisation of American military forces and nuclear arms. With the obscurity that marks the rhetoric of all apocalyptic prophets, he concluded:

> "The dragon's teeth sown at Greenham Common have sprung up as missiles on the other side. . . ."

After Thompson's daring excursions into the no-man's land between America's "born-again Christians" and Russia's "still-born Marxists", Caspar Weinberger's rejoinders were without grand drama. He was concerned with democratic legitimacy, and who was entitled to speak in the name of "the People." Americans were in Europe because the elected representatives of the West European Allied governments wanted them there. There were no NATO ground-launched intermediate nuclear weapons, nor any plans to deploy them, until the Europeans became alarmed at the rapid proliferation of the Soviet *SS-20s*. This was a true but very prosaic point, and it seemed almost churlish and irrelevant. How ungallant not to accept the proffered bouquet of flowers—in return for an unconditional offer of US military withdrawal.

[9] The resolution read: "*That There is No Moral Difference between the Foreign Policies of the USA and the USSR.*" To the surprise of many local ideological observers, it was defeated by 271 votes to 240.

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There would be, Thompson insisted, "no prospect of peace" until Americans went home.

As we have seen, E. P. Thompson has always been vague about his unilateralism, sometimes even denying that there is any valid distinction between unilateral and multilateral disarmament.[10] Oxford, then, offered few surprises, only perhaps the expanded simplification of what, in Thompson's view, should be Europe's opening move in the post-Andropov era of the great East-West tension. He developed his special formula for ending the "mutually exacerbating process" whereby Pentagon hawks encourage Kremlin hawks. It was, simply, to demand and to force the unconditional withdrawal of . . . all US missiles . . . *and* all US military forces.

Would the effect of this permit the Soviets an overwhelming European superiority in every category of military strength? Would it result, given the best of West European efforts to "catch up" (against which, surely, we can expect more demonstrations and pacifist militance), in only a slight lead—or, possibly, a lead so massive and comprehensive that the Western European nations, shorn for the first time of their US protection, would have as much prospect of ignoring "fraternal peace-loving requests" from the Soviet Union as do the East Europeans today? Is this how he intends to meet the solemn obligation which, he says, we all owe to the disenfranchised, powerless citizens of Central and Eastern Europe?

Questions, all prosaic questions, far from transcendental and mythological scenarios in which small miracles are modestly promised.

It is easy to be irritated, as so many were that evening in Oxford (a majority, as it turned out), by far-fetched historical analogies and by gratuitous rudeness to those who interpret the world scene on the basis of other ideas and concepts. And it was tempting to dismiss Thompson's central contentions as disingenuous as well as dangerous. This is, I am afraid, a bit wide of the mark. Fraught with dangers such politics may be—but sincere and consistent they are, if hopeless in their optimism, self-deluded in their near hysterical pessimism, coherent only in the spectacle of the illogical chasing the implausible.

On the night I learned a small, perhaps trivial thing about the New Left and the Old Cause, yet one which is worth recording. Towards the end of the debate, in an evidently unscripted and perhaps tactically incautious comment, E. P. Thompson apologised for failing to wear the traditional debater's dress of dinner-jacket and black tie (he was in fact attired in a neat three-piece suit of indeterminate hue).

> "I mean no discourtesy, but some of us who were appalled by the First War and who subsequently fought in the 1939–45 War made a pledge not to wear dinner-jackets again. You see, we saw them as symbols of the class system and we had a vision, a socialist vision, of a classless society. . . ."

A man who matches his tie to his vision and never wavers over a cut of cloth in half-a-century may well choose much else on the same basis of selection. What will he be wearing to the great debates in his longed-for future society? Blue buttoned-up jackets as in Mao's vision? Tight-fitting double-breasted suits (with ribbons and decorations) as on the platforms of Muscovite socialism? More likely he will be sporting his off-the-peg number to the end. Mankind may be redeemed, but never the black velvet tie or dinner-jacket. Who could ever have imagined that a simple lounge suit could be endowed with so much world-historic virtue?

So I sat there hot and uncomfortable for hours in the traditional hall of the Oxford Union (normally unheated for debates, but now like a blast-furnace under the arc-lights of the assembled television cameras) and watched a man who thought he sounded right and looked right: what the well-dressed visionary should wear when he is devoting an evening to saving our bodies and souls. I thought for a fleeting moment of Carlyle's Professor Teufelsdreck: *Sartor Resartus* indeed. It is perhaps E. P. Thompson's greatest illusion of all that he thinks he has got hold of the issues of war and peace by their satin lapels.

[10] The notion is a dazzling blur, since taken over by Neil Kinnock's Labour Party. One negotiates with Moscow over multilateral disarmament for the duration of a Parliamentary term; and should one get nowhere, then one proceeds to scrap the British nuclear deterrent unilaterally. One can almost hear the voices of Messrs Brezhnev and Andropov from the grave: Patience, Comrades, why concede a single concession—when in four years time they will scrap their armoury of their own free will. . . .

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Luigi Barzini

A House on the Via Cassia

I LIVE IN A small country house I built in 1948 on the Via Cassia, or *anglice* the Cassian Way, the ancient Roman consular road which led to Siena and Florence. It still does, except that trucks and cars fortunately now travel on the new *autostrada*, and so the venerable highway on which all northern travellers reached the Eternal City for more than two thousand years is used mostly by local traffic. My neighbourhood is known as *La Tomba di Nerone*, Nero's Tomb, which, of course, is an erroneous popular appellation, as Nero was notoriously buried in Piazza del Popolo on the spot where the church of Santa Maria del Popolo was later built to exorcise his ghost. The sarcophagus not far from my house really belongs to an obscure and assuredly virtuous Roman bourgeois couple, a certain Publius Vibius Maximus and his wife. *La Tomba* is by no means a suburban location. It is only seven or eight miles from the heart of Rome, the Campidoglio, an insignificant distance in any of the other great cities of the world.

For a number of reasons I designed my small villa with the professional help of a recalcitrant young architect in the style of a Campagna farmhouse, that is, a real farmhouse and not the chic, coquettish parody of one. Local farmhouses are practical and attractive. They are irregular, asymmetrical, and casual, with outdoor covered stairways, built to accommodate what is inside without a thought for decorum or prestige. They age well. I got the interior plan from an old American book called *One Hundred Small Budget Homes*, which I found on a push-cart in the flea market, and combined it with the exterior plan for an L-shaped building on three levels, open to the south. Then I asked the architect to enclose the whole thing in the proper peasant style. He was very unhappy about the project. He dreamed of building a striking Bauhaus or Frank Lloyd Wright *chef-d'oeuvre*, more glass than masonry, possibly painted with one of the brilliant hues of Italian *gelati*: pistachio, strawberry, or peach. He wanted his work above all to provoke the admiration and envy of his colleagues and be published in some glossy specialised magazine.

MY CHOICE was dictated by experiences, memories, and scruples. I remembered what had happened to a friend of mine, Goffredo Parise, a well-known novelist, who had given *carte blanche* to an architect he trusted and ended as the owner of a house he described as "the wreck of a plane which had struck the hillside." I was born and brought up in a very up-to-date (at the time) *Art Nouveau* house in Milan. By the time I was twelve or thirteen I had grown to loathe the bowel-like decorations, the nereids' heads with seaweed coiffures, and the tulips engraved on the elevator's glass panes. In my new house I did not want anything connected to contemporary tastes and fashions, in order to prevent my children from experiencing the same feeling of disgust and repulsion as they grew up.

I wanted my house to have an ageless style, a comfortable and possibly elegant interior, but to be, if not invisible, at least inconspicuous outside, to look as if it had always been there. I built it with thick tufa stone walls (the most common local material), traditional small windows (to keep it cool in summer and warm in winter), painted it the sepia colour of Rome, and covered it with antique handmade tiles from demolitions. Nobody wanted such tiles at the time and they could be had for practically nothing, little more than the cost of trucking them away. Now, of course, they are fashionable and very expensive, since people have learned that, with them and a few trans-planted adult trees, they can transform any brash new villa into an instant century-old family seat.

What also inspired me, I think, was the desire to show my awe and respect for the holy ground on which I was building. I found out later I was the only one to be troubled by such scruples. The new apartment buildings, which in the following years surrounded me (I do not see them through the many trees and thick bushes I planted in time for my defence), all have a blatant, shrill, South American or Levantine (pre-war Beirut) look. Evidently they are meant to prove how utterly modern and cosmopolitan their owners and architects are.

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ONE NIGHT, after a trattoria dinner with a friend who knew all about such things, I reached the decision to buy a piece of countryside large enough both to be isolated and on which to build. I was then looking desperately for an apartment. I had visited many. Some were luxurious dwellings for courtesans, movie stars, corrupt politicians, and foreign millionaires, far too expensive for my modest means. The cheaper ones were too hopelessly squalid, lacklustre, and depressing, too small for my needs and still too dear for me. I was almost resigned to giving up my search. The friend reassured me. He showed me on a paper napkin that, as building costs were very low and land in the country still dirt-cheap, with the same amount of money I could buy a piece of farm land and build the house I needed. I could have all the rooms necessary for family and servants, a large study and capacious library—where I could finally deposit all the books I owned which had been stored here and there for years—a children's nursery, adequate storage space for bric-à-brac, a garage, and possibly even a box stall for a saddle horse.

He pointed out that I could enjoy silence, fresh air, a restful panorama of rolling hills, and, with some luck, a view of Rome and its many church domes. The city was not surrounded (as other cities were) by industrial suburbs, not yet and not in all directions, anyway. There were few villas since most Italians as a rule do not like greenery—peasants love to cut down all the trees they can—and prefer to be surrounded by noise, crowds, and solid masonry. The last city houses gave way almost immediately to vegetable gardens, small woods of ilex and cork oaks, vineyards, olive groves, brooks, and pasture land dotted with grazing sheep. The decision to move to the country, therefore, was not a radical one at the time. One could always drive to the centre of town in a few minutes on empty roads.

I LOOKED FOR a suitable spot and found it after a search of only a few weeks. It was a pleasant hillock of about seven acres, half of which was covered with an ancient evergreen wood. The view was splendid. I could see rolling country that was green in winter, and on one side, in the distance, the roofs of Rome. The hillock overlooked a little valley at the bottom of which, among the many trees, ran a stream whose water was as cool and clean as if it came from the mountains. The opposite side of the valley had been owned forever by the *Ospedale di Santo Spirito*, and I knew it could not be sold. I thought that was a good thing, as I would not be one day faced with the sight of vast concrete and glass constructions, the screaming of their tenants, the weeping of children, and the blaring of radios.

On the ridge opposite the property, trains ran at regular intervals, towed by the last steam locomotives in Italy, which blew puffs of white cotton wool. It was, and it still is, the line going from St Peter's to Viterbo. Its station at Ottavia can be seen in all Italian movies set at the beginning of the century, since it is the only one left without dangling electric wires. I timed the minutes it took me to reach the place from Piazza Colonna by car: ten or fifteen. The silence on the spot was absolute. The only living beings I could see on the road were a few wayfarers, an occasional herd of sheep, and caravans of mules loaded with charcoal. The charcoal was still used for cooking before the development of bottled liquid gas by the poorer Romans, who liked the taste it gave their food. I decided the place was made for me.

LUCKILY AT ABOUT that time the Berlin Airlift had been started, a constant day-and-night drone of freight planes flying over to supply the German city with all it needed. Everybody, or almost everybody, in Europe feared the outbreak of the Third World War, and, in Italy, a Communist takeover too. The Italian Communist Party was then still totalitarian, disciplined, ruthless, strictly Stalinist, a docile instrument of Soviet policy. Its programme was apparently not the abolition of concentration camps but only the change of the guards' uniforms. It still possessed secret stores of the weapons it had received from the Allies a few years before to fight the Germans. And it maintained in readiness shadow military formations with their cadres, which could be mobilised within days.

Owners of unmovable property like real estate, large marble statues, or massive antique furniture were trying to sell as much of it at almost any price in order to buy gold sovereigns on the black market. The coins, as everybody had learned in the previous years, were extremely handy. They took little room, could be hidden, buried, or transported easily, taken abroad to Corsica on a small boat or to Switzerland over mountain paths known to smugglers. They could also be used to bribe a policeman, a jailer, a political commissary, or a border guard. As a result, there were many sellers in Rome and no buyers. My bank assured me there were no quotable prices whatever for land.

For these reasons I managed to buy my hillock for a ridiculously small sum, much smaller than I would have paid only one or two months before. I closed the deal in a hurry, against the advice of prudent friends, on the basis of several considerations. The low price, first of all. I felt that, if the war did not break out, the purchase would turn out to be the best investment of my life. But would there be a war? It was my guess that there would be no such thing. My journalist's intuition was comforted by reading George Kennan's famous article in *Foreign Affairs*, signed "X", which practically excluded the possibility of an imminent conflagration. I also thought that, if war came, having or not having bought a hill with a view on the outskirts of Rome would not have made a great difference in the universal catastrophe.

FINALLY I was attracted by other, non-commercial advantages. The ancient wood, the clear brook, and the story-book little train (the last of its kind that could still be called *choo-choo*) would charm my children and enrich their childhood memories all their lives. They would certainly meet Little Red Riding Hood in the wood and, later, cowboys and Indians. They could bathe and splash each other in the little stream in the heat of summer. I even hoped the train—which, a short distance up the road, ran parallel to the Cassian Way—would one day possibly be turned into a part of the city public transport system, with small stations built at intervals just as such railway lines had been adapted to local traffic in many other cities.

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There were then no foreseeable difficulties to hiring help. Millions were unemployed and desperate. It was part of one's civic and humanitarian duties to give work to cooks, butlers, chauffeurs, maids, nannies, and gardeners. Their wages were an affordable pittance. They were grateful and happy to find a job, to be sheltered and fed. I was also finally moved, I confess, by a silly Italian sentimental and egotistical reason. The grounds and the house, which I would one day leave to my children, would impart some sort of immortality to me, for some years anyway. The trees their father had planted and the house he had built would be a rallying point, a fulcrum, an anchor in a rapidly changing world, a tie with the past for sons, grandsons, and possibly great-grandsons.

MANY YEARS have passed since then. The little story-book train has been turned into two ramshackle rusty diesel wagons. No more toy locomotives, no white cotton-wool puffs. The wagons are always empty. No person in authority—surely too busy with intrigues and ideological disputes—has thought of turning the line into a part of the city transport system, and people now go to Viterbo more easily by car.

The city has reached and overtaken me, bringing with it both advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages: street lighting, city water (I depended for years on the excellent water of my well, lifted automatically by an electric pump), many good shops and supermarkets not too far away, as well as banks, garages, service stations, schools, churches, a nearby taxi stand, and even one bookshop. Among the disadvantages: the time necessary to reach the centre over traffic-clogged roads has increased to half an hour at best and to an hour at peak times. It is now difficult, almost impossible, to find help and gardeners. One must do with, be grateful for, any decrepit and doddering veteran, or illegal immigrants from the Third World who could be arrested, together with their employer, for infringing the immigration law.

The clean brook is now an open stinking sewer, frothing with detergents, as all the apartment houses recently built upstream on the Cassia empty their waste waters into it. The neighbourhood woods, but not my own, are strewn with garbage, broken WC bowls and bidets, empty bottles, plastic containers, gutted mattresses, rusty cans, throwaway syringes, and pale condoms.

This, of course, is happening all over Italy and could have been foreseen. The most unsettling disadvantage is something else. The investment which aroused the envy of all my friends, which could have theoretically provided, if I ever sold my land, a life of *otium* or deplorable idleness for me and fabulous affluence for my descendants, has turned out to be a mirage or *fata morgana*. My property is worth practically nothing. Nobody in his right mind would want to buy it. I don't even know if I am still its owner. Recent laws and zoning regulations have determined that almost half my acres could one day be turned into a public park whenever the regional authorities find enough money and the time from abstract problems and obscure plots to expropriate me; another part is destined to be forever what is called *Zona Verde*, or green zone, in which I am forbidden to cut down the very trees I planted and to build anything; and the rest could only be sold to a junkman, old-car wrecker, or a dealer in bricks, tiles, and other building materials, because, for a series of complicated legal reasons, it is forbidden to construct houses on it. As a result, land, any land within the city limits, is no longer sold or bought, but only the cubic metres of a municipal building permit, which I cannot obtain. Furthermore, no buyer wants grounds around the house he will build as it would entail enormous problems, work, and expenses: the difficulty of finding a gardener, the mowing of lawns , and the planting and watering of flowers.

ALL THIS IS, to be sure, purely theoretical as I have no intention of selling. Since I do not want to spend the rest of my life in the monotonous summer of some tax-shelter Caribbean island or in tax-exempt Monte Carlo, since I do not want to live forever on a luxurious air-conditioned yacht surrounded by beautiful and dissolute women, the possibly unconstitutional abolition of my rights as a landowner has purely a speculative significance. It is the end of a dream, the end of otiose conversations over drinks with friends. I even find it some sort of consolation. If my property is worth practically nothing, it is to be presumed that my heirs will have to pay practically nothing for inheritance tax. This, of course, is by no means certain, governments being what they are, greedy and miserly.

I CONFESS I am happy as I am, the dubious owner of my hillock. I turned it into a miniature estate. I still have servants of sorts and old men working in the garden for fabulous wages. I created a tiny vineyard which provides acceptable ordinary table wine for the household. I had found about seventy old olive trees when I bought the property and have since planted many more, more than enough to supply my needs for each year. The oil is unusually light, delicate, tasteful—as good as Tuscan oil—and I have enough in good years to give bottles to friends, to my grown-up children and their families. Last year I also planted two very young trees, which by 1997 will produce the first olives, the size of pigeon eggs, to put in brine. I have a goodly number of orange, tangerine, grapefruit, and lemon trees, as well as prune, pear, apple, peach, and apricot trees, which provide enough fruit for the house in the summer and to put in glass jars for the winter. I have a flourishing vegetable garden and a small poultry yard which provides me with fresh eggs. I also breed rabbits and pigeons for the table.

I may delude myself but I find the taste of my produce infinitely better than anything shops sell. My bottled tomato juice made only with the first ripe tomatoes not yet touched by the irrigation which dilutes the flavour, my one-hour-old eggs, my salads, and my small peas are recognised by my friends as having tastes contemporary man has forgotten. I have roses galore in the summer and flowers of all kinds the year around. I suspect at times all this costs me more than if I lived *en pension* in the royal suite at the Grand Hotel (I don't know for sure, as I never made the comparison), and that I am an irresponsible, stubborn, and spendthrift fool to live as I do.

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Or maybe the silence, the fresh air, all my books around me, the good steady work I am doing, the pleasure I see on the faces of my grown-up children and my small grandchildren who visit me often and stay in their old house, the country walks with my dogs, and the peace of mind might allow me to taste my first pigeon-egg olives in brine from the tiny trees I planted last year. And even if I don't reach that year and do not eat the olives at the age of 89, I had a pleasant time trying.

What disturbs me is why I am being severely punished for having conceived my life along such strictly Italian lines: a house in the country, in my name and not a corporation's, designed in a respectful, ancient peasant style, to be left to my descendants. I made the choice not to invest the money in gold, diamonds, stamps, or shares, all things which would not serve to perpetuate the family sense of solidarity for generations to come. Am I the only Italian left?

AS we go to press, we learn with distress and deep sadness of the death, on Friday, 30 March, of Luigi Barzini, aged 75, in his house on the Via Cassia. He was one of the great journalists of our time, author of a number of incomparable books (on America, Europe, and Italy), and was for thirty years a valued contributor to the pages of ENCOUNTER. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him, and by a warm and loyal international readership who treasured his prose and admired his wit and wisdom.

M.J.L.

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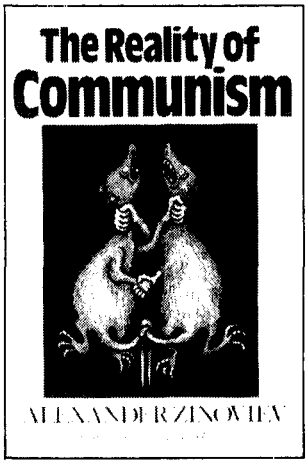
George Urban

A Dissenter as a Soviet Man (II)

A Conversation with Alexander Zinoviev

5. At War with the World



URBAN: YOU HAVE SPOKEN *of "the correlation of forces." In the most popularly held Western view, we are ill-equipped and ill-prepared for any serious confrontation with the Soviet Union. Is that your view, too?*

ZINOVIEV: Yes and no. Every system has its characteristic strengths and weaknesses. The Western world consists of individual states, each with its own interests and traditions. They are to some extent held together by NATO, but their military cooperation is clearly not comparable with the highly centralised, totalitarian structure of the Soviet Union.

At the same time the West is more flexible, more adaptable, and more inventive. My five years in Western Europe have increasingly convinced me that the Western nations have so much resilience and such colossal reserves of creative thinking, in the military as well as in the economic and cultural spheres, that the Western way of life will survive anything that may befall it—even a possible Soviet occupation after a lost war. When I lived in Russia I was convinced that we were generally better prepared for war than our opponents. I am no longer certain that that is true. West European civilisation is a living organism. It can resist hard times, recover from illnesses, and develop in a great number of new directions. Even Communism would assume civilised, liberal forms if it ever reached Western Europe.

—Are you implying that "the Western way of life" would survive a lost war but our West European social order might not?

ZINOVIEV: I believe the Western type of liberal democracy will not survive for very much longer with or without war; but I do think that the Western forms of Socialism and Communism will be different in kind from what we have in the USSR. You cannot force Frenchmen or Italians or Americans to live like Russians: to tolerate the camps, forced labour, censorship, miserably low living standards, ideological conditioning, and the rest. They just will not have it.

—You talk like a "Euro-Communist" . . . .

ZINOVIEV: No, I'm simply answering your questions.

—You have given me a fairly optimistic picture of the strengths and resilience of Western society. What about the USSR? You have repeatedly said that it is a menace to the Western world.

ZINOVIEV: There again we must weigh up the system's typical strengths and weaknesses. The Soviet Union is strong because it is in a state of permanent mobilisation; it is a military camp. Every able-bodied Soviet man and woman has a warlike role as a trained reservist in the armed forces. Upon mobilisation he need not be told where to go and what to do: he *knows* because he has had years of discipline and training.

—I have just been reading General Ogarkov's booklet calling on the Soviet people to prepare themselves physically and psychologically for total war . . . .

ZINOVIEV: Yes—but you don't even have to do that, because everyday life in the Soviet Union is a life of regimentation, ideological conditioning, paramilitary training and the like. The Soviet régime is, and always has been, at war with the non-Soviet world. That is its defining characteristic.

—All of which testifies to the great military strength of the Soviet system . . . .

ZINOVIEV: Yes, but this strength is not durable, and it does not translate into successful expansionism. Let me start with the second point.

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When Western Sovietologists examine the military potential of the Soviet Union they take no account of one all-important human factor: the character of the Russian people. A country set upon world conquest needs people who have it in them to be world-conquerors. They need a people who (rightly or wrongly) feel superior to the rest of mankind, and have the will and the organisational ability to run their imperial dependencies. The British and (in their different ways) the Germans and the French have all had these qualities.

The Russian people haven't got them. They are not a master race. Their history has turned them into underdogs. They are not fired by an imperial mission; nor do they feel, as the French did, that they have a right to impress their culture on less fortunate races. But your Western students of Soviet affairs, with all their fine tables, models and statistics, do not understand this decisive characteristic of Russian history and the Russian psyche.

I'VE BEEN WONDERING *how familiar you are with what Western scholars* **did** *say on this subject. George Kennan, for example, in our conversation in 1976,*[1] *recorded an opinion which is almost identical with the one you have just expressed:*

> **"I don't attribute to the Russians the political and ideological capability of controlling hundreds of millions of West Europeans. They would find West Europeans, by virtue of their numbers, background and sophistication, much harder to regiment and control than they did the people of Eastern Europe. . . .**
>
> **The Germans . . . had much more effective people, more capable administrators, and greater self-confidence than the Russians had ever had. When they overran a country, they had the men who spoke the language, could take charge of the railways and the telephone system, and were not only competent to perform a great many other tasks, but were also endowed with enough self-confidence to win, to some extent, the respect of the local people. The Russians would not be able to do any of these things."**

—One could quote parallel examples from other Western historians.

ZINOVIEV: Well, if Kennan said these things independently from my observations, so much the better. The fact to remember is that the Russians are not a master-race.

—But wouldn't you agree that your 19th-century Slavophiles thought otherwise, that their entire philosophy sprang from the conviction that the Russian people **did** *have a mission, a Messianic mission, in the world?*

ZINOVIEV: This is what they said—but it was, and is, a preposterous idea. A mission like that presupposes cultural superiority, and that is precisely what the Russian people have never had. Without cultural superiority and the conviction that it is your right and duty to assert it, any missionary imperialism is a fantasy. The Russian people are generally indolent, ill-organised, and lacking in any sense of discipline and self-discipline. Their will to control other nations and "lead" the world is conspicuous by its absence. They may be strong enough to prevent the Americans from drawing the entire world under their hegemony; but they haven't the power to do it themselves.

—This is a point Zbigniew Brzezinski has repeatedly made both in office and out of office,[2] *adding for the benefit of American neo-isolationists that there is, in fact, no alternative to American world leadership.*

ZINOVIEV: The Russian inability and even unwillingness to assert leadership has to be experienced to be believed. I remember from my own wartime military career that I was incapable of imposing my will on my own subordinates. Now, you might think that I had a whole air armada under my command. Not at all. I had three—*three!*—men on my staff; but I couldn't tell these three miserable subordinates what to do. They each went their own way. Later on, in Moscow, I was for a short time chairman of my University collective but gave it up as something utterly uncongenial.

—Uncongenial in what sense?

ZINOVIEV: In the sense that I could not control the people in it. More important, I did not *want* to control them. You see, I'm a typical Russian—I had absolutely no wish to push these people around. I could see that they all had different inclinations and psychological needs. Why should I put them into harness? Now this, I'm sure you will agree, is not an attitude that makes for Imperial Expansion and Happy Imperialists.

[1] George F. Kennan and George Urban, "From Containment to Self-Containment", ENCOUNTER, September 1976.

[2] See, in ENCOUNTER, Zbigniew Brzezinski and George Urban, "The Perils of Foreign Policy" (May 1981), and Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Tragic Dilemmas of Soviet World Power" (December 1983).

ALEXANDER ZINOVIEV (b. 1922) is one of the Soviet Union's leading philosophers and the author of many specialised works in the field of mathematical logic, several of them translated into Western languages. He held research appointments in the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and for fourteen years was a member of the Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Moscow, where from 1970–78 he was Professor of Logic and Methodology of Science.

In 1977, after publication (in Russian) in the West of his celebrated satire "The Yawning Heights", Professor Zinoviev was deprived of all his appointments and expelled from the Communist Party. A decree revoking his Soviet citizenship for "behaviour damaging to Soviet prestige" was signed by President Brezhnev in 1978 while Professor Zinoviev was attending a Philosophy Congress in West Germany. Condemned to permanent exile from the Soviet Union, he now lives in Munich.

GEORGE URBAN'S recent contributions to ENCOUNTER include conversations with Jeane Kirkpatrick (November 1983), Eugene V. Rostow (April 1983), Daniel Bell (February 1983), W. Averell Harriman (November 1981), Zbigniew Brzezinski (May 1981), Leszek Kolakowski (January 1981) and Milovan Djilas (December 1979). The first part of his conversation with Alexander Zinoviev appeared in the April issue.

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—Nevertheless, at the end of the War, when the Red Army was sweeping westwards, there was a great deal of talk at all levels of the Soviet forces of not stopping at the Anglo-American lines but "driving to the Atlantic." Wasn't that a popular expression of an imperial ambition?

ZINOVIEV: Two points. The "drive to the Atlantic" may have been a slogan current in the *Soviet* Army; but we are now discussing the character of the *Russian* people. Not all Soviet troops are Russian, and the leadership of the Soviet forces now is not even predominantly Russian—it is predominantly Ukrainian. Second, the slogan originated from Stalin—and he was a Georgian. So you cannot say that driving to the Atlantic expressed a *Russian* imperial aspiration. In any case, the whole idea was grotesque, because world conquest was not part of the psychological training of the Red Army. The war was a defensive war. We were not prepared for overrunning Western Europe.

WHAT IF ANOTHER *iron-willed leader, somewhat in the mould of Stalin, came to power in the Kremlin under warlike conditions? Could he not lead a willing Empire and a willing Red Army (motivated by the sort of sentiments that inspired you when you were fighting Hitler) into imperial expansionism under defensive slogans? And wouldn't that automatically constitute a predominantly* **Russian** *expansionism too?*

ZINOVIEV: A Stalin-like figure could never again rise in the USSR. Stalin was a unique phenomenon. He was a child of the Revolution: he represented the youth of Communist society; and he was, for us, undoubtedly the greatest man of the 20th century. Lenin gave birth to the Revolution; but it was under Stalin that this newborn phenomenon began to grow and experience the joy of being alive and trying to reach for the sort of often impossible targets young men and women like to reach for in all ages and all civilisations.

—Aren't you really saying that Stalinism may have been beastly for those who got caught up in it, but **I** *was eighteen, had a little money jingling in my pocket, the sun was shining and the girls were pretty?*

ZINOVIEV: Your imagination is more fertile than my dialectic.

—You said a moment ago that Soviet strength is not "durable."

ZINOVIEV: Yes. I was making the point that whereas Western society is best compared to a healthy organism with full powers of recovery, the Soviet system is sick and easily pushed into terminal illness because it has cancer, a social cancer, at its very centre. It is an uncreative, arrested, moribund society.

—Once again, I cannot keep up with your dialectic. You have been saying repeatedly in this conversation (and, of course, over and over again in your books) that the Soviet system is extremely strong, that its military potential is gravely underestimated in the West and, generally speaking, that it is symbolic of the sort of society that will eventually embrace all mankind. **Now** *you are saying that the Soviet system is cancerous. Can you help me to understand your reasoning? If the Soviet system is so weak—why is it so strong?*

ZINOVIEV: This is too large a topic. The nature and future of Soviet society will have to be the subject of another conversation.

6. *The Lie as a Way of Life*

SUPPOSE THIS WERE *February 1917 and you had foreknowledge of the sacrifices the October Revolution would bring in its wake: Civil War, the slaughters of the Collectivisation Campaign and the Great Terror, the Gulag Archipelago, Hitler's rise to power through Stalin's misjudgment of the state of the Weimar Republic, and the rest. Would you still wish the October Revolution to happen? This is a question you have yourself asked in your book "The Radiant Future", but answered ambiguously.*

ZINOVIEV: Yes, I would fight for the Revolution—today, or tomorrow. I have written a whole book about my opposition to Stalinism (which appeared in Russian in the summer of 1983). But if I were to choose between living in the truly terrible epoch of Stalin and a blander and more comfortable age, I would, without hesitation, choose Stalin's.

I don't want to repeat myself too much. Let me just say again that Stalin's was a time of idealism, dedication, and even heroism. We had an aim in life and fought for it. It is not often in history that one can do that.

—But can you envisage, can you re-enact for yourself, the screams of the tortured and dying, the hangings and shootings which (as you have said) decimated your own people under Stalin and Lenin, causing many more deaths than Hitler managed to chalk up in all his concentration camps—and still say that the Bolshevik Revolution is something you'd fight for all over again?

ZINOVIEV: The things you describe were tragic but not criminal. The Revolution brought education, health, upward social mobility, and a new beginning. We have discussed all this before. Some people perished; others made good. If you made a count of the number of people for whom the Revolution meant a great new opportunity and those for whom it involved a tragedy, you'd be surprised to find by what a colossal margin the beneficiaries of the Revolution exceeded those who lost out by it.

—Then the human sacrifice was—on balance—amply justified?

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ZINOVIEV: "Human sacrifice" is a morally loaded notion. It is inadmissible when talking about history. Morality does not enter the picture. History happened as it happened. My job is to take account of it and analyse its consequences. . . .

—As a Soviet Man. . . .

ZINOVIEV: . . . as one who was born into Soviet society and knows that it cannot be destroyed in a thousand years. We have to accept it as it is, and try to improve it, and live with it as best we may. That alone is my concern and the concern of the Soviet people.

—You have, it would seem to me, a double—an emotional and intellectual—investment in the Soviet system; and you seem to be, therefore, almost mesmerised by it as by some unbending, elemental fact. But can **our** *understanding of the Soviet Union be helped by one so thoroughly committed; or is it perhaps, paradoxically, being helped* **because** *you are so committed? It is, after all, not an everyday occurrence that a distinguished dissident reminds us of the alleged strengths and virtues of a system which expelled him. That, if I may say so, is the piquancy of your position and indeed your special claim to fame. Are you conscious of this role? Have you, perhaps, deliberately designed it as something that will set you apart from other Soviet exiles and thus capture the headlines?*

ZINOVIEV: I'm a Soviet Man and a scientist, and I flatter myself that I know what I'm talking about. Whether this helps your understanding, either because of *what* I'm saying or because *I* am saying it, is not for me to judge.

The facts are quite simple. We can assume for all practical purposes that the Soviet system is here for the rest of human history. The question I then have to ask myself is not: how do I get rid of this system?—because I know perfectly well that I can't—but, rather: how do I induce the system to give me better housing, more food, better drainage in my town, and so on? That is the meaningful line of questioning. The State? The Party? You might as well be upset about the depth of the sea or human mortality.

BUT WHATEVER HAS HAPPENED TO *Russian idealism? The history of your country in the 19th century and Russian literature of the 19th century are one long saga of young men and women burning with a selfless (and often entirely impractical) desire to salve their consciences by saving the Russian people and all of humanity. Your "October Revolution" would be unthinkable without them. Yet here is a distinguished Russian mathematician and philosopher, who has made his name in the world with his satires of Soviet society, telling us that any notion of change in the Soviet system must be limited to a better drainage system! Imagine what a Vera Zasulich would think of that!*

ZINOVIEV: Oh, many things that were possible before the Revolution aren't possible now. You can't be idealistic in front of a 50-ton truck bearing down on you on the highway. For us, the material factor you have mentioned with some disdain is not trivial. When your principal problem in life is an extra five square metres of living space, or access to some store that can feed you, or some medicine without which your child's life may be lost, things that seem trivial to the Western eye assume egregious importance.

—The system is, then, achieving its purpose—security of survival—simply by keeping the population in poverty.

Now, one set of sociologists tells us that poverty makes for unrest and revolution; another that it paralyses the will and makes for acquiescence. The Soviet case, as you've presented it, seems to endorse the latter. If so, nibbling away at the edges of the system will not help. Only wholesale change will, or might. . . .

ZINOVIEV: That, as I've said, we must rule out for all practical purposes, even as a result of a war. Poverty in the Soviet Union is great, and the supply of food and other essentials worse than it has been at any time since World War II. It is hard to imagine how it could deteriorate any further. All this does, of course, confine people's zeal for reform to the satisfaction of their immediate needs. The will for greater things *is* paralysed, and that, together with the all-pervasive nature of the Communist state, also means the paralysis of any idealism and salvationism of the kind we saw in the 19th century.

Imagine for a moment how the average Soviet student or teacher goes about improving his situation—getting accepted for a postgraduate course or promoted to be a "*docent.*"

Well, he will not want to challenge the university system as such, much less the Soviet system. For him, as a matter of fact, both are quite congenial. What, then, will he do? He will take small and cunning steps within the system. He will act in such a way as to convince his superiors that he is the right man to be given promotion. And how will he do that? He will do it by offering "presents" or straightforward bribes to the right people, and even by writing denunciations.

I have written extensively about denunciations in *Homo Sovieticus.* Let me just say that denunciations are an accepted practice in Soviet society. They are a way of life and quite natural. In a tough struggle for survival, you help yourself as best you can. For the average Soviet citizen, whether young or old, the things that matter are food, housing, clothing, footwear, health, and promotion. There is just no room or surplus energy left over for the sort of idealism that motivated young Russians in the 19th century.

—But what about the traditional Russian preoccupation with "the truth", the refusal to accept the lie promoted by the authorities?

ZINOVIEV: Well, if a student voiced his opinion that the Soviet system or the Party was based on lies, he would at once be expelled from the Communist Youth Organisation. His prospects of employment would be seriously jeopardised. This course, therefore, is just not open to him. In any case, most young people fully accept the system, including official lying, even though, as young people always tend to be, they may be critical of this or that aspect of it.

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—Alexander Solzhenitsyn placed "the need to stop lying" at the very head of his priorities. Wouldn't you agree with that?

ZINOVIEV: It is a ridiculous demand. In the Soviet system it is impossible to live without lying. But we have to take a good look at the word "lying" and see what it really means. In Western usage "a lie" is something clearly reprehensible, for it stands for the negation of truth. Not so in the USSR. There are some 50,000 writers in the Soviet Union. They cannot write "the truth" in the Western sense, but what they do commit to paper is not "lies" either. Soviet ideology and mores define the parameters within which a writer has to work. He has to express himself within the given verbal orthodoxy. But the key to that orthodoxy is well known to his audience. He can read the writer's meaning even though it might seem to the Western observer that what the writer has given the reader is "lies." Solzhenitsyn makes it all sound far too simple.

YOU SAID A MINUTE AGO *that for you the Soviet system is a "natural fact" which you don't question. It now seems to me that it is a little more than that: a natural fact which you appear to support with (if I may say so) unnatural zeal for one who has been so shabbily treated by the Soviet régime.*

ZINOVIEV: The fact that I have been so treated cannot alter my basic judgment of the system. I have, as you well know, never been slow to subject various aspects of the system to very sharp criticism. I castigated it for its food shortages, for its appalling housing record, and a whole lot of other shortcomings.

I now live in Western Europe. I have plenty to eat, I have a decent apartment and possess three suits—but, believe me, I would give all that, and more, if I could once again be part of a Soviet collective.

—What, precisely, is the magnetism of the Soviet "collective" for you?

ZINOVIEV: Soviet life is imbued with a sense of common purpose, which imparts a firm orientation and a new and rich consciousness. It makes you feel that, despite all the failures, you are going somewhere. No one in the West can experience that sort of feeling.

—A feeling of mission, perhaps even fanaticism?

ZINOVIEV: It is just a whole way of life—collective life. *Homo Sovieticus* is not an individualist, and perhaps not even an individual. Any definition of him must start with the observation that he is a member of a group and cannot be thought of away from this group. That, incidentally, is also my own tragedy in the West. I have no group. I am a fish out of water, and so are all Soviet men and women—even the most embittered exiled dissidents. Whether they live in Paris or in London, they carry the Soviet system around with them.

—You write in "Homo Sovieticus" that the Soviet collective is "the most just system on earth." That isn't our normal image of a Soviet kolkhoz *or a Stakhanovite factory unit. Indeed, we tend to think that the Soviet collective is one of the most* **unjust** *systems in modern history because it means regimentation, thought-control, and depersonalisation, as well as very poor living standards. Are we in error?*

ZINOVIEV: We are up against the problem of non-comprehension once again. Members of some primitive tribe in Polynesia or Africa owe their happiness to their total integration in the culture of the tribal community. They are not "individuals." The notion of individualism would strike them as meaningless. For the Soviet people, too, the Western idea of "the individual" as an entity that has rights and deserves respect independently from the social context which sustains him is simply incomprehensible.

—Is this, in part, because Christianity does seem to have been received late, and (especially) badly, in the Russian lands?

ZINOVIEV: Whether it was or was not is not my problem at the moment. Certainly, the concept of the individual as a child of God and the vessel of an all-important conscience has totally disappeared from Soviet thinking. Soviet people are trained from childhood to look upon themselves as members of a group; and they can, by now, think and feel in no other way. To be "a personality" or "an individual" carries associations of eccentricity, irresponsibility, and disdain for your neighbour. Take my own example. In my Institute at Moscow University, I knew a great many people. I was aware of their attitudes to

A Russian Dream

MALCOLM MUGGERIDGE: **Well, now that you have been living in America, have you realised "the American dream"?**

ALEXANDER SOLZHENITSYN: *I never dreamed "the American dream", but what I have realised in America for the first time in my life is an everyday opportunity to devote myself completely to the work of writing. In the Soviet Union I could not do so because, in the first place, one always had to be doing something else in order to scrape things together. In the second place, I could not hold on to what I had been writing the day before because I had to reckon with a visit from the KGB that night or the next day. At most I kept with me a few pages of manuscript, but that was hardly enough in order, for example, to be able to compare one part of "The Gulag Archipelago" with another. And, in the third place, I almost never had the opportunity to get into a library and use the books there. For a while I had that privilege as a member of the Soviet Writers' Union, but then I was summarily thrown out. As a result it was very difficult for me to get hold of the books I needed to read and consult, not to mention the works written and published abroad, especially by our Russian writers in the emigration, which were totally unavailable.*

Now I have five or six tables on which I can spread all my manuscripts and keep certain reference books open at the needed page. I can devote myself undisturbed to research and literature. There are no interruptions, distractions, no forced holidays or unexpected side-trips. In this sense a dream has been fulfilled: to be free to do the work for which I believe I was born. And all this is illuminated by the warm sun of one great hope—that I will one day experience a Russia which has freed herself from Communism.

DIE WELT *(Bonn)*

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me—favourable and unfavourable—and they were aware of my attitude to them. We were accustomed to one another. We were a group. I would have sacrificed my life for any of them.

Consider the contrast with my life in Western Europe. I now give lectures in many Western countries, publish books and articles, and appear on television. People write about me: "Zinoviev is a wise man", "Zinoviev is a great satirist", and so on. I even get fan-mail. But does any of this mean very much to me? Not at all. It means nothing, because I live in intellectual segregation, as most Frenchmen and Americans and Germans do too . . . each in his overheated, overfurnished, personal ghetto . . . each fighting the depressions and despair that come from satiety, isolation, and the lack of a higher collective purpose.

But if someone from the Soviet Writers' Union let it be known that *he* thought I was a good writer—now *that* I would consider to be extremely important!

—But surely the Soviet Writers' Union are the very people who ejected you from Soviet society and imposed on you the indignity of having to live in the West. How, then, can you recognise their authority to judge whether you had written a good or bad book?

ZINOVIEV: Fish can live only in water, birds only in the sky. I'm a fish, and I belong to the Soviet pool. I cannot be a bird, try as I might. You may use all your power of persuasion telling me: "Fly with us! Look at these wonderful skies, enjoy the sunshine!" I could not do it because I'm not a bird. Hence my argument that praise from the Soviet Writers' Union is still the one thing that matters to me. I am a Soviet Man.

IT IS CERTAINLY VERY ODD *that, having been expelled from the Soviet Union for anti-Soviet behaviour, you should still seek ideological recognition from the same people who caused your "downfall." Thomas Mann did not seek Dr Goebbels' approval for the books he wrote in the USA. He would have been highly embarrassed if National-Socialist scholars or journalists had lavished praise on him.*

ZINOVIEV: Soviet people cannot shed their identity. They may be dissidents, they may live abroad, they may be anti-Soviet from top-to-toe: their character as Soviet men will still stand out in everything they write and do. Even the most outspoken anti-Soviet literature is written in step with Soviet ideology—in negative step with it.

—What you are saying is that the regimentation and psychological conditioning of Soviet society have been more successful—now that the system has lasted 66 years—than most of us would readily admit. George Orwell has, after all, been proven right.

ZINOVIEV: Yes, whatever the reason—once a Soviet Man, always a Soviet Man.

—You are rather scathing about the "isolation" of Western man in his "ghetto." When I think of all those millions of Soviet citizens whose one—mostly unattainable—ambition in life is to achieve a modicum of isolation in the form of an apartment, a few rooms of their own that they don't have to share with others, your condemnation of us does not sound quite convincing. I can think of no social situation to which Jean-Paul Sartre's "Hell is other people" would apply more appropriately than the Soviet collective.

ZINOVIEV: I don't agree. But you are right in suspecting one thing: the longer I live in the West and the more my life in the Soviet Union recedes into the background, the rosier becomes my image of the Soviet collective. I acknowledge this as an inevitable influence on my current thinking: the tendency to forget the unpleasant side of collective life.

7. *Who Fights for Peace, or Freedom, or Country?*

HOW WOULD *the East European "allied" forces behave, in your opinion, if the Soviet Union found itself at war? Would they add to, or take away from, Soviet power?*

ZINOVIEV: They would definitely boost the strength of the USSR.

—Are you saying that the Hungarian, Czech, and Polish troops would willingly put their lives on the line to aid their oppressors?

ZINOVIEV: Ah, but it doesn't work like that. Take Poland. A considerable section of the Polish people may well feel unhappy with the Socialist régime as it is at the moment; but the vast majority of Poles nevertheless accept the system. Otherwise the system would have been swept away by now.

—You talk as though Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 had never happened, as if Poland had never had martial law and self-Occupation imposed on it. Surely the East European régimes owe their survival to the USSR, and to no other factor.

ZINOVIEV: You underestimate the power of habit and vested interests. The social *status quo* in Eastern Europe is linked to the well-being of a great many key people: the bureaucracy, the officer class, the state-employed professional élites are all its beneficiaries. This oligarchy will certainly go along with the Soviet Union as long as they are persuaded that the Soviet Union is on a winning ticket.

—Here, too, your assessment is at variance with informed Western opinion. I remember talking to Dean Rusk, the former US Secretary of State, about this problem. He was firmly of the opinion that the satellite countries would greatly weaken the war-making potential of the Soviet Union by sabotaging Soviet

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lines of communication, pinning down Soviet divisions, and so on.

ZINOVIEV: It would be impossible to do any of that. Sabotage—well, every soldier in the Soviet armed forces "sabotages" his unit every day of the week. This is quite normal in the USSR—yet the system survives.

—Petty theft, neglect of duty, insubordination in peace-time are one thing. Organised sabotage of the Red Army on a nation-wide scale in war is, I would have thought, quite another. The Red Army's vital lines of communication run through Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany. A restive Polish or Czech population, to say nothing of a disaffected Polish or Czech Army, could present the Soviet leaders with formidable problems. This, among other things, is what Dean Rusk had in mind.

ZINOVIEV: Your scenario sounds logical enough in the abstract, but on closer inspection it turns out to be absurd. The generals of the Red Army aren't complete fools, you know. The Polish, Czech and East German units are so closely tied in with the Soviet divisions that any independent move on their part is virtually impossible. They rely on the Soviet forces for their supplies of ammunition, replacement and repair facilities, food and reconnaissance. Above all, they are part of an order of battle and a command structure which rule out any large-scale insubordination, let alone any uprising on a national scale.

Remember that at the time of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Czechoslovak forces, which were substantial and well-equipped, were helpless bystanders because under the Warsaw Pact's integrated order of battle they were facing westward. In any case, the "allied" troops are most unlikely to be given sensitive front-line duties. Their task will be to follow up the Soviet advance, consolidate the gains, mop up resistance, and provide the occupation forces. Such activities are easily controlled.

—But what about the Poles? Wouldn't **they** *be a mortal threat to the Soviet lines of communication?*

ZINOVIEV: No—the East European forces, including the Polish ones, are too thoroughly integrated by now to do any such thing. It is too late, far too late, for these hopes to be realistic.

Of course, if the Soviet empire began to fall apart, either as a consequence of military setbacks or internal disintegration, or a combination of the two, the East Europeans would reassert their national independence and add their bit to the fall of the empire. It is *then* that all the factors you have listed might come into their own—but not, as I believe, before. Eastern Europe would regain its independence as a *result* of the Soviet Empire expiring—not as one of the principal causes.

Your questions turn on the problem of "sufficiency." How much loyalty and subordination on the part of the East European forces is enough to ensure the smooth functioning of the Soviet military machine in the early phases of a war?

Take my own military career as an example. I was, as I've said, bitterly opposed to Stalin both during the War and after. Yet I fought for him, as we all did, because I was an officer of the Red Air Force—and I fought for him to the best of my ability and with complete dedication. Now, in Poland we can see a somewhat analogous situation: the Poles serving in the Polish forces may dislike the Russians, the Polish régime, the suppression of *Solidarity*, whatever. But they are *cemented* into the Warsaw Pact. The system has a stranglehold on them, and that stranglehold ensures sufficiency. The Kremlin may not be able to inspire the satellite forces to be *enthusiastic* defenders of the USSR, but *unenthusiastic* cooperation is enough.

—Sticking to the Polish example—it has even been argued that since the Polish armed forces, and especially the ZOMO *riot police, have not hesitated to use force against their own brothers and sisters, they would scarcely hesitate to turn their guns on Germans!*

ZINOVIEV: You are right.

THE TESTIMONY OF HISTORY *would seem to suggest that in a warlike emergency the Western Alliance would want to see to it that Eastern Europe weakens the military power of the USSR, not at an advanced stage of Soviet disintegration but early in the game. Do you think this could be achieved by telling, for example, the Romanians and Hungarians that whichever turned its face against the Soviet Union first would have a privileged claim on some disputed territory?*

ZINOVIEV: No—all East European claims would have to wait until the fate of the Soviet empire is settled or close to being settled. Until that happens, no propaganda can be effective.

—Let us look at the chances of weakening the Soviet system in peaceable ways. The Kremlin has, as we all know, a considerable hand in supporting the so-called Western "Peace Movements," even though it has not created them.

ZINOVIEV: Yes, when all is said and done, the "Peace Movement" is a Soviet weapon, no matter how indirectly the Soviets may be wielding it, and no matter how much genuine good faith may be the ruling motive of the Western peace protesters.

—Why are you so emphatic in saying that it is "a Soviet weapon"?

ZINOVIEV: Because it is a training-ground for designing and running mass protest movements. Once the machinery is set up and the people are trained for one kind of protest, they can be used for another. The Soviet system works in cells and cadres. The Kremlin is extremely conscious of the need to create a basic network of like-minded people who can be used to pursue Soviet objectives. The "Peace Movement" performs that role. It is a Trojan horse against which the Western democracies can do very little. Nobody is against "peace", any more than they are against motherhood.

—Don't you think we could export, or re-export, this

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propagandistic obsession with "peace" to the Soviet Union and its client states in Eastern Europe? Couldn't we tell the Ukrainians, for example, that the deployment of so many Russian missiles on their soil would do nothing for their survival in a nuclear war—exactly as the Soviet Marshals are telling West Germany? Can you envisage Ukrainian "peace"-marchers parading in the streets of Kiev under posters reading "Ukrainian mothers will not allow their sons to die for Andropov's war", or "KGB cooks books to exaggerate US nuclear arsenal", and the like?

ZINOVIEV: Absolutely impossible. You must understand that no internal force can be strong enough to weaken the Kremlin's obsession with military power. If the Soviet economy could afford it, the Soviet Marshals would fill every peasant barn with tanks and self-propelled guns. For a régime that is still uncertain of its legitimacy, both internally and in the world at large, it is an article of faith that military power has to be maximised at whatever cost. Domestic protest, if that could be imagined under Soviet conditions, wouldn't have the slightest impact. Soviet power and the consciousness of power can only be stopped by countervailing power of equal or superior strength. If the Soviet move into Afghanistan had met Western resistance—*that* might have stopped Soviet expansionism. But "peace marches"?

I said "*if* domestic protest could be imagined"—well, it cannot be imagined. You don't seem to be able to comprehend to what extent Soviet society is passive and regimented. If the government orders people to demonstrate for "peace"—they will come out on the streets, carry the prescribed "peace" banners, and demonstrate for "peace." But if the Soviet government orders a demonstration for *war*, the *same* people will march and demonstrate for war. Our people are resigned. They are indifferent. They do not believe that they can have a will of their own, or that they could assert it if they had one.

—But . . . given the Ukrainians' strong feeling of a separate national identity and their second-class citizenship (as many of them see it) under Russian domination . . . couldn't we gently remind them through our information services: "You may find yourselves in extreme danger if a nuclear war should break out, because so many Russian missiles are deployed on your territory. Show your national independence by demanding the removal of foreign rockets—and stay alive"?

ZINOVIEV: It would be senseless and useless to say any such thing.

—Why?

ZINOVIEV: Because you must put yourself in the shoes of a typical Ukrainian. His first reaction may very well be positive. He may very well say—Yes, we must get rid of these rockets. But after a moment's consideration he will find that he is helpless. He is part of a Russian group at his workplace and in his living quarters. He will lose his job if he steps out of line, and disqualify himself for any other employment. There will be a black mark on his record, if indeed he does not find himself in prison. Whereas if he obeys the orders of higher authority, demonstrating as he is ordered for peace *or* war—he is left alone to the extent that anyone is left alone in a totalitarian system.

YOU ARE PAINTING A PICTURE *of an absolutely seamless tyranny in which individual protest is not only impossible but also unthinkable. One wonders how the East German, Czech, Hungarian, and Polish reform movements ever came about.*

ZINOVIEV: That is another matter. But let me go on about the Ukrainians. The fact is that the Ukrainian people know all about the missiles deployed on their territory and are conscious of the danger they represent. How do they know about them? Because the Ukrainians are great walkers, and you cannot go on a walking tour in the Ukraine without seeing these missiles all over the place. And then, we all have relatives in the Red Army. Our boys come home for leave and tell us how and where these weapons are deployed and of the targets they provide. So if you tell the Ukrainian people in your propaganda that they are under constant threat because they have all these missiles on Ukrainian soil, you're not telling them anything that they haven't themselves known for a long time.

But that's not the whole story. Most Ukrainians, while recognising the danger, will tell you in the same breath: "Ah, but we have to defend ourselves against American and British and French nuclear blackmail. Without these missiles, the Americans might destroy us."

—Aren't you saying that the Ukrainians tend to be schizophrenic: that they are anti-Russia with one half of their minds but believe Soviet propaganda with the other?

ZINOVIEV: No, that's not it. Like all Soviet people, Ukrainians are very skilled in social adaptation. In a totalitarian system rationalisation is the condition of psychological survival. The Ukrainians will rationalise what they feel they cannot change in any case, and say: "Yes, we'd be much better off without these Russian missiles—but we must do *something* about the American threat."

And this rationalisation is a psychological lifebelt. What do you say to yourself and your family if there is no meat to be had in the shops? You cannot blame the whole system, or the Government. These are given. You cannot argue with them. You might as well blame "God" or "human nature." Therefore you justify the situation in terms of Soviet ideology: you blame the meat shortage on ungrateful Poles and Czechs who have repaid your wartime sacrifices with rank ingratitude. Or you blame the Americans, whose nuclear threats have forced the Soviet Government to stockpile food for a rainy day.

WE ARE ONCE AGAIN TOUCHING ON *the essential differences between your attitude and ours in the West. You say of the Soviet system and Government that these are "given", as though they had been imposed on the Soviet peoples by some impersonal force which no human agency can change.*

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We in the West do not believe that political systems come into being and survive under impersonal conditions. We believe (and I personally believe) that the Soviet system exists because the Soviet peoples tolerate it, and if they tolerate it they have to bear some responsibility for their own misfortunes as well as for the misfortunes the system imposes on others.

ZINOVIEV: The truth is that Western historians just cannot identify with Soviet mentality. They seem to think that categories that apply under Western conditions have a corresponding relevance to those obtaining in Soviet society. They believe that the notions of "truth", "freedom", "democracy", "human dignity", "individual rights" carry the same urgency and associations of meaning in Soviet society as they do in parliamentary democracies. They do not.

You cannot transplant the Western "peace movement" to the Soviet Union, because the context is wholly different. I can understand your desire to demoralise Soviet society, but in order to do that you have to concentrate your fire on areas that are truly vulnerable: food-shortages; bad housing; the scarcity and poor quality of clothing; the non-availability of certain medicines; privilege and corruption in the educational system, and the like. These are the things Soviet people worry about. These are the exposed nerves of Soviet society. But to tell the Ukrainians that they are not "free" enough, or to hold up the example of *Solidarity* as something Russian trade-unionists ought to follow, betrays a non-comprehension of Soviet reality.

WE HAVE BEEN CAUGHT *in a circular argument. We started this long colloquy with the observation that Western scholars, diplomats and journalists are, in your view, incapable of understanding the Soviet system; and we are ending it on the same note.*

Have we, then, been wasting each other's time? I don't think so. You have, with your forthright explanations, greatly added to my own knowledge of Soviet Man—and especially one Soviet Man—even though I am just as puzzled and bewildered by him as I was many hours and many arguments ago. Perhaps it is the relentless statement of paradoxes that, in the end, illuminates reality. Perhaps there is by now an unbridgeable gulf between the values inculcated by the Soviet system and those we in the Western world hold to be essential to a free and dignified human existence. Lenin's notion that "freedom is necessity understood" seems to underlie much of what you have been telling me in this conversation. If there is one idea the free democratic world rejects, and has to reject on pains of being untrue to its own essence, it is this Leninist denial of human freedom in the name of human freedom.

Personally, I am enough of an historical optimist to believe that Soviet Man is a temporary phenomenon—that the quest for liberty is so original a requirement of human life that it stubbornly survives even where the experience of liberty is inhibited and its outward models are destroyed. But that would take us into another conversation.

Thank you, Professor Zinoviev, for your patient cooperation.

AUTHORS

William Trevor's latest novel, *Fools of Fortune*, was published last year by *Bodley Head*. *A Writer's Ireland: Landscape in Literature* has just been brought out by Thames & Hudson.

Gerald Frost, Executive Director of the Institute for European Defence & Strategic Studies in London, is a contributor to *Protest and Perish: A Critique of Unilateralism*, published recently by the Institute.

Luigi Barzini, the Italian author and journalist, sat as a Liberal member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 1958–72. His books include *The Italians* (1964), *From Caesar to the Mafia* (1971), *O, America* (1977), and *The Elusive Europeans*, published in 1983 by Weidenfeld. We are grateful to *House & Garden* in New York for permission to reproduce this article.

George Urban, Director of Radio Free Europe, recorded this conversation on RFE's behalf. Among his numerous publications, he has edited *Détente* (1976), *Communist Reformation* (1979), and *Stalinism* (1982), all published by Maurice Temple Smith.

Edward Pearce is a leader writer and Parliamentary sketch writer on the *Daily Telegraph* in London.

Francois Fejtö, Paris correspondent for *Il Giornale Nuovo*, is the author of *The French Communist Party* (M.I.T. Press, 1967) and *History of the People's Democracies* (Penguin ed. 1974).

George Steiner is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Geneva. His numerous works of literary criticism include *Language and Silence* (1967), *In Bluebeard's Castle* (1971), and *After Babel* (1975). This June Oxford University Press publish *Antigones*, his discussion of the Antigone motif in Western culture, and in July Penguin Books bring out *George Steiner: A Reader*.

Jan Morris's many works include several books on Wales: *My Favourite Stories of Wales* (Lutterworth Press, 1980), *The Small Oxford Book of Wales* (Oxford University Press, 1982), and *Wales, The First Place* (Aurum Press, 1982).

James Lasdun works in London as a publisher's reader. His short stories have appeared in various anthologies and literary magazines, and in 1982 he received an Eric Gregory Award for poetry.

Magdi Wahba's "Cairo Memories" originally took the form of a George Antonius Lecture at St Antony's College, Oxford.

Sidney Hook's portrait of Bertrand Russell (ENCOUNTER, March) forms part of his forthcoming political and intellectual autobiography, which includes a series of vivid sketches of John Dewey, Albert Einstein, and Morris R. Cohen, among others. Some readers will have noted the Einstein and Cohen portraits in *Commentary* and *The American Scholar*, respectively. Professor Hook's memoirs, entitled *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century*, will be published in 1985.

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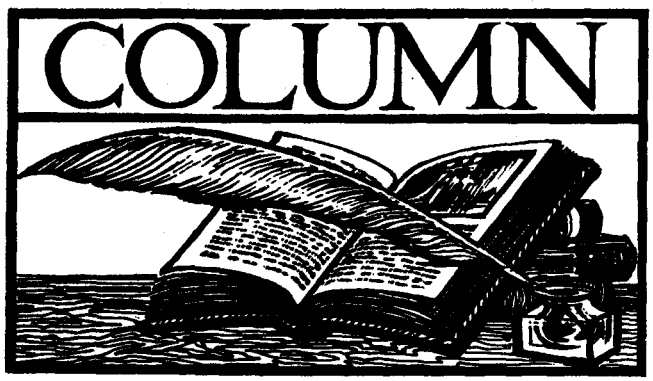

IN AN ASIDE last month, I called second-hand bookstalls "a sure sign of civilisation." Never say "never": never say "sure." What about those dingy trays of garbage in the local market? Stale paperback pornography, Volume Seven of someone's collected sermons, *Your 1948 Horoscope*, forgotten footballers' biographies, *Welcome to Sunny Broadstairs*, and a set of book-club editions rescued too late from some flood. It's hard to imagine who buys them—not only retail but wholesale, in sagging cardboard boxes from duffle-coated dealers on the fringe of honesty.

Who, for that matter, buys the books at the very top of the market? Incunabula or modern first editions, outrageously priced in discreet elegant shops like Savile Row tailors', smelling of old wood and polished leather, with dapper sales staff and an air of gentlemanly bluff. African history—military regalia—bloodstock—topography—librarianship: there seems no rationale to antiquarian booksellers and their estimates of worth. Colour plates, yes, in huge faded books of wild flowers or peasant costume. But *A History of Punishment*? *Droll Indiscretions*? *The Confessions of a Regency Buck*? So far as I know, these are invented titles; yet they may give you the flavour—a hint of the smoking room, a touch of the "curious" as the catalogues call it, an intimation that whatever seems to be on offer here is hardly the mainstream of literature.

So, as usual, Philip Larkin's right. As with people, so with books: "It all depends what's inside them."[1] Still, with that proviso, I stick to my guns. The pleasantest cities I know are those which sell second-hand books. It may be the *bouquinistes* along the river in Paris, or the emporia of Hay-on-Wye; it may be a noble eccentric cavern on an American campus, or the courtyards off London's Charing Cross Road. Low rentals may help, or a local spa; so can a lingering Barchester society of elderly church-goers. In Britain, Salisbury is one example; another is Edinburgh; Aberystwyth's a third. There, and in similar places, I've found the Platonic form of my ideal second-hand bookshop. Outside, a row of battered volumes at knock-down prices: it may just include some favourite neglected writer like Douglas Hayes or J. Maclaren-Ross, or an out-of-print collection of *New Yorker* pieces by Frank Sullivan or Wolcott Gibbs. Inside the door, down a step and past an ancient shop bell, you come upon shelves of once best-sellers, guides to the district, books on gardening or cookery, school stories, Edwardian statesmen's memoirs, old magazines, and folios of architectural prints. But brush past these, and at last you'll find a small shabby bookcase crammed with hardback pocket editions. This is your quarry—or rather, it's mine.

There they stand with their trim gold-printed spines: the *Phoenix Library* showing three stylised flowers, the *Travellers' Library* puzzling almost everyone with a bearded, goat-footed pilgrim clasping an urn surmounted by what some took to be a Christmas pudding sprouting lilies instead of holly. These two series, but especially the latter, reprinted many authors I still like to have on my shelves, from Walter Pater to Aldous Huxley, from Samuel Butler to Ambrose Bierce. Some of them reappeared as early Penguin books—but with what a difference. Nowadays, you can still find *Phoenix* and *Travellers' Library* volumes at half the price of a modern paperback; *and* they were bound in cloth instead of the embossed paper substitute used by so many hardbacks now. When I want Sherwood Anderson, Hilaire Belloc, Emily Brontë, A. E. Coppard, W. H. Davies, George Douglas, Lafcadio Hearn, D. H. Lawrence, Percy Lubbock, Somerset Maugham, George Moore, Middleton Murry, or H. G. Wells, it's in this format that I seek them first. The very names reek of the period, the golden middle-class utopia of the 1930s. If I quoted some of the others, the flavour might be more authentic, but the names would hardly mean a thing. Who, today, reads J. B. Atkins, Rex Clements, Kathleen Coyle, Stephen Graham, Arthur Mason, Marmaduke Pickthall, or W. G. Waters?

I SUSPECT YOU'VE GUESSED the answer: people like me. Before long, in front of those pocket editions, the collector's itch takes over. No matter how obscure the author, how dim the title, or how tedious the theme, one reaches for the book to complete the series. It looks attractive; it's relatively cheap; it won't take up much room. Eventually, the walls are lined with middlebrow reading-matter from another age—the age of bookmen, and essays, and literary cricketers, and exquisite prose style. And because it's there, an Everest of mediocrity, one feels obliged to take it on. Gasping for lack of oxygen in the rarefied air, one meets that literary yeti, the Abominable Showman—the desperate penny-a-liner giving himself the airs of a leisured, cultivated amateur, plucking a rose here, a peach there, fondling a calfbound Herrick, toying with a pipe or a Russian cigarette. Even Virginia Woolf, in some of her essays, couldn't quite evade this pervasive persona. Was there ever a "common reader" of the sort she envisaged, well-versed in every sense, conversant with literary allusions, endowed with both taste and time? Perhaps there was, in those distant days of croquet and plus-fours. Reading Sunday-paper reviews, or listening to the BBC's Radio 3, one sometimes feels that they're catering still for some such privileged public. But isn't it composed, these days, of busy professionals—teachers, computer programmers, cultural journalists, and devotees of specialist research?

The fact is that books have changed with society; and the second-hand bookshopper is as much a time-tourist as the visitor to monastic ruins or pre-Columbian caves. "*A good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit*", the Everyman's Library used to quote from Milton: it made the toes curl even then. Now, in the view of many, a book's no

[1] Philip Larkin, *Required Writing* (Faber, 1984), p.85.

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more than a system for information storage and retrieval, and not too efficient at that. True, it has freeze-frame capability, and fast wind forward and back; but its search facility is often defective, however good the index, and there's no remote control for use in the bath. Above all, it's wordy. What modern user of this archaic data bank wants disquisitions on whaling from Herman Melville, interrupting the story of *Moby Dick*? Just as soon settle for a commercial. "I like these Condensed Books", said one impatient friend of mine: "they cut out all the padding." And so, of course, does our latest way of imbibing classic stories, as TV serials or on *Masterpiece Theater*. What an improvement on print!

I'm only partly joking. It's often been noted how the best television series arise from not-quite-best books—*The Forsyte Saga*, *Brideshead Revisited*, *The Raj Quartet*. Is it because there's no sacrilege involved? Or because actors have more scope with less than towering characters? Perhaps, in the end, it's because the artists involved in the series feel freer to use their own full sensibility, rather than playing butler or estate manager to the real master. "A good TV series is the precious life-blood of a respectful adaptor?" Somehow, it doesn't seem likely.

NOR IS THIS THE ONLY WAY in which the mass media impinge on books. In France, for many years, newspapers have seemed literary, and books journalistic. Classics apart, new books appear and disappear very rapidly. The instant account of some *cause célèbre* can be on the bookstalls within a week or two; within a further month, it may be impossible to find. Back-lists have long been rare—and they're now becoming rare in Britain and the United States. *Le Dossier secret de* whatever, a fat tome with a glossy paper cover and a red band screaming INEDIT!, is one of the commonest sights in Paris bookshops. Its American equivalent is the blockbuster, often these days a lesbian autobiography, but just as likely some power fantasy on *Dallas* lines. Give it a few months, and it dies like the dodo or the Rubik cube. As in New York, so in London. Remainder shops scoop up the leavings of last year's hype; but the steady sellers, the good unexciting worthy books that used to be warehoused in pocket editions for "the common reader"—these aren't kept in print for so long, even in paperback. The culprit is probably inflation. Soaring property values, higher labour costs, the problems of security and insurance, all make it expensive for present-day publishers to continue the traditions of the 1930s. Instead, they play inverted Russian roulette, making each book a gamble, hoping for a "TV tie-in." Some are even conceived as television series, rather as successful series later give rise to pulp books. Go to the Frankfurt Book Fair, and you feel as if every other volume is a video cassette in disguise. Go to a fashionable book-prize celebration, and you might be at a genteel cattle show. Miss World has nothing on Miss Winner, blushing and sweating under the blinding lights.

Self-comforters may argue, as when confronted with inner-city violence, that it was all far worse in the past. George Gissing, in *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, painted a dismal picture of the old-style man-o'-letters, scribbling for a crust but masquerading as a gentleman-scholar. In Smollett's day, hacks wheedled and flattered patronising titled boobies, and turned out their books as best they could. Shakespeare probably knew what hype was; and he certainly understood haste. Even Homer had to appeal to the masses.

Very well: but not all the past was like that. Inner-city violence may have been worse in Boswell's London, or Mayhew's; but it wasn't a great feature of Christopher Robin's. Grub Street may have existed for centuries; but in the days before television and paperbacks, there was probably more equality in what its citizens called "the Republic of Letters." A fair novelist could make a fair living. A few made millions. But the element of gambling was less.

A further counterpart of that change lies not in the mass media, but in mass education. "Write a textbook, my lad, and you'll be made for life." So it used to be said: today the market for cribs and teach-yourself books is alarmingly crowded. But while some writers of fiction, faction, or popular history look down-market in the hope of riches, others find success beckoning from above. "Become a set author in an English course, my lad." That's the ticket if you're really ambitious, for fame as well as for fortune. Neither, alas, is yours to command. But the facts reinforce the self-same tendency—away from general culture, and towards specialism: away from "the common reader", and towards the student homing in on the prescribed text. His reading, no doubt, will be more intense and intelligent; he'll not be easily sidetracked into heterodox interpretation. But will a lonely writer's voice pierce his reading self?

IN GLOOMY MOMENTS, I foresee a clinical future. In the rectangular shopping arcades of the new town there's the only bookshop. It stocks board games and magazines and candy and video software. On one wall, there are rows of crisp new paperbacks: Crime and Thrillers, War, Science Fiction, Romance. A central table is filled with picture books, mostly TV spin-offs: *Wildlife Safari, TV Dinners, Great Gardens, Homes Stately Homes*. Some are remaindered, others offered at a special pre-publication price. At the back of the shop are the books recommended by the local university. And that, barring computer manuals, is about all. If you want the collected works of an unfashionable 19th-century poet, or a contemporary writer's unsuccessful second novel, you have to go to the library—only to find that it's out. If you want a foreign book, you must telephone a specialist supplier. And a second-hand volume? Oh, no, Sir: not in Flatchester, or Oldsmoville, or Glaring-on-Sea.

And yet, of course, Nature abhors a vacuum. Just because many regular bookshops are coming to resemble railway or airport bookstalls, there's new scope for the more arcane. At least one admirable new bookseller has opened in London in recent years; and second-hand shops, although sometimes fly-by-night, are plentiful too. Their prices have soared. Few, now, have quite the leisurely charm of the late Robert Chris's establishment in Cecil Court, London, where any regular customer was invariably—often embarrassingly—teased. There's no equivalent now to the splendid chaos of Foyles's old collection. But still there are treasures to be found—not least

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the leather-bound India-paper New Century editions of Dickens and Thackeray, printed some 80 years ago when the copyrights lapsed. And from one recent forage in a finely muddled second-hand department I brought back a delightful minor trophy: a first edition of Wyndham Lewis's wayward book on Shakespeare, *The Lion and the Fox*. It had belonged to Hugh Kingsmill, and it still bears his marginal annotations, in a neat, cross, scholarly hand.

"Carelessly put"—"A very foolish simplification"—"What a sentence!"—"Well, which is it to be? Prattling infants or costive dreamers?"—"Nonsense"—"More nonsense"—"I don't agree."

Some of the notes are long and learned essays. As they crackle across the page, one listens in vain for Lewis's crushing rejoinders. But for less than the cost of the average new novel, the chance to eavesdrop on an argument half-a-century ago seems cheap at the price.

M

Attempt

Sunlight raising oil in the skin that becomes a mirror of light.
Seaspray dried white as fishbones. Then lightning

The flash of sapphire and silver slammed
Behind secure safe-doors in the heavens,

Iron-grey doors miles-high, and on those doors
Doors slam, it is electricity

That unpicks them again, and as this spidery thief
Steals across his webbings of light

By instant science he transforms his vehicles
Into radio-waves in a great surf of all forms

That passes through us, and, look deep
Into your head, do you not see flicker there

Sapphire-in-ruby, silver-in-blood?
It is a foreign station, speaking Old English

Or flashing dumb-shows on the air of glimpses
Which join up in radio-waves behind the colourless air,

Great rainbow staircases jointed by Orpheus.
Our own House of Broadcasting wipes

His dumb-show from the air. I repeat
The tune, as best I can. It concerns

The baby restless in the silences
Stretching its arms up to the silver of lightning,

Opening its eyes wide as sapphire in thunder.

Peter Redgrove

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Jamie Grant

How to fold Army Blankets

Everyone's breath burst out of their mouths
just like the smoke breathed
from the lips of rifles facing the range,

that shattered man-made
hummock whose undigested belly-full
of shells would one day

stand to baffle archaeology. Each
morning we'd parade
outside the canteen, polished thoughts still wreathed

with figments strange
as dreams. Nights of fitful sleep on sacks of hay.
The mountain peak south

from the camp was blocked neatly as the tall
crown of my old slouch
hat. The days marched on a curve which always

returned to its start;
they finished with the prim geometry
invented to make

soldiers out of children—with heartless
domesticity
which scrubbed, aligned or folded whatever

we weren't expected
to salute. Imprisoned in those ways
we were taught the art

of folding the army's blankets—we'd take
the stitched seam over,
so, and *so*, till it became a flawless

cube of wool, reflected—
in shape at least—in the cold metal pans
they served our meals from.

Remembering that hard-earned skill, a bored
civil servant years
from his army days folded up the map

of Viet Nam
the morning we left the camp. His office
must have been spotless,

with calf-bound volumes lined up into squads,
every paper-clip
gleaming. None of us knew a thing about

that room. The frost-smoke
mountains watched us as we started out
on another clear

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cold morning. I longed to fold that country
like a rug which we
could stow forever out of mind. No one spoke.

David Harsent

Bonnard—Breakfast

(from "Punch's Gallery")

1.
An eyelid flickers, startled by the glass
then droops in anticipation of the brush.

She starts on an indrawn breath. Her mouth goes slack.
Touch by touch, she thickens every lash.

2.
She does it naked. When she stoops to be
nose to nose with herself, her breasts make globes

clean of the rib-cage. There are poles of light
in the coppice beyond the lawn. A ground-mist ebbs.

3.
Ovals and angles: he pictures the slope of her shoulder,
a hoisted hip, and lets a minute lapse

between placing their plates and knives and going to fetch
the basket of bread. A rhombus; a dark ellipse.

4.
Water boils for the eggs. Chasing a thought
he sees it turn to confront him. *There's a smell . . . .*

She is choosing a dress. He guesses she'll put it back
then choose another and put that back as well.

5.
She might decide to stroll (he draws the bolt
on the tall French windows) shoeless across the grass

and then by the terrace, the stones holding her spoor.
She would see the table he's set: his place, her place.

6.
She never looks in a mirror to brush her hair;
so she opens the blinds to view the day, hanging

her head to left and right for the volley of strokes.
The garden rocks on a pivot. Her ears are ringing.

7.
It is whisky, the sourness rising in his nose
and scorching the membrane. His eye traces a smudge

above the skirting-board . . . . She has come to the stair . . . .
An ounce of glass litters the window-ledge.

8.
He has posed her there, but can't make her descend,
or smile, or speak. He wonders, was it rash

to have picked that dress, to have left her feet unshod?
The welt on her cheek comes and goes like a blush.

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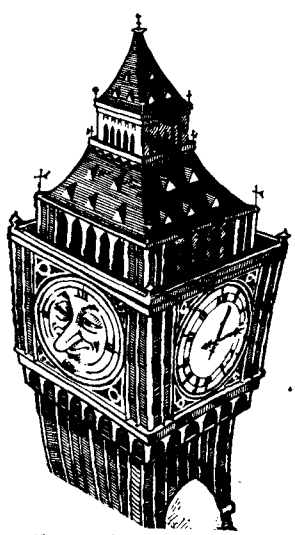
NOTES & TOPICS

London Commentary

The Falling Fruits of Power

By Edward Pearce



MORE THAN ANYONE would have expected, we are becoming preoccupied with the standing of the Prime Minister. For Mrs Thatcher had become accustomed over the years to a good press: one which was too good for her judgment. The adoring *Daily Mail*—which sounds in the managed sections like a group of estate workers assembled by the land-agent to line the drive in their smock frocks and huzzah the Duchess's carriage—has done Mrs Thatcher's reputation no good at all. She does not need and should not receive gross flattery; and the *Daily Mail* only parodies what a majority of the press has to offer. There is something sub-Soviet about all the "MAGGIE SLAMS SHIRKERS" sorts of headline. It used to be confined to the underprivileged press but by gradual degrees that style has crept into the deteriorating qualities. Their general decay is best discerned in headlines where the Chancellor now "axes" things in twenty-four point type on a quality broadsheet as he used to in forty-eight point on a whore-and-exclamation-mark tabloid.

Servility and illiteracy seem to go together; cliché and adulation hold hands as they garland the Prime Minister. She has also of course received the full treatment from a Continental press and from some American sources to whom she was first a phenomenon and then an example to their more quotidian leaders. Though it is a modest condition to be hotter copy than Giulio Andreotti.

So vanity—a vanity banked and fed by sedulous praise—has done harm to Mrs Thatcher in a way which almost any Prime Minister may expect. We forget the fact now, but Harold Wilson was for his first three years in office—before his very proper devaluation of the currency—praised even by Conservative commentators for his wit, speed of mind, news sense, and gilt-finished modernity. They turned on him, of course, and at once grossly exaggerated his faults, missing until his active political life was over the virtues of kindness, good nature, and (while we are about it) intellect.

It might be said of Mrs Thatcher that people are turning on her now. Let us not do that. It would be more constructive and intelligent to acknowledge the injury which is done to the ablest statesmen by overpraise followed by over-reaction. We have a way of treating politicians like oranges, or like the sponge in Hamlet's remarks to Rosencrantz. The ape in Hamlet's discourse kept the sponge in the corner of his jaw until he needed it, then. . .

It is but squeezing you
And sponge, you shall be dry again

It would be something of a tragedy if we did that to Margaret Thatcher or if she caused it to be done to herself. I happen to think that the waste of Harold Wilson in high office was altogether a tragedy, whatever proportion of it derived from his own defects. Harold Macmillan (now at his own urgent bidding absurdly turned into an hereditary peer) was strictly for show; Edward Heath was a personality risen from the ice age and aspiring to a mediocrity he never quite achieved. Wilson was and Thatcher could be the waste of a major talent. Though, whatever happens, she has had substantial achievements.

An exceedingly clever, rich-favouring budget from Nigel Lawson notwithstanding, it is not going well for her now politically; and not only does one have a sense of 1967, the year from which Harold Wilson never recovered, but the clichés, like trolls, have come to get her. The bears of almost no brain at all who organise front pages, set headlines, and make our newspapers look the way they do have taught themselves a long phrase—"banana skin." It has four syllables, but by diligent repetition they have mastered it; and we are all to understand that Mrs Thatcher and her Ministers have banana skins cast before them where primroses lay before. Now, it does not follow that because Fleet Street says something it is axiomatically wrong, only that things are vastly more complicated.

One of the banana skins (sorry)—the conduct of her son in Oman, obtaining a contract for the Cementation company—has been drummed up by *The Observer* and certain journalists on *The Sunday Times* into what it is not. *The Sunday Times*'s people outdid St Peter 2.333 times, denying themselves precisely seven times instead of the Saint's three (and not to the Romans but to Barclays Bank) in order to obtain the remarkable evidence that Denis Thatcher is a counter-signatory on his son's company cheques. *The Observer* has emulated Lord Hervey—"just hint a fault and hesitate dislike", and from the same epistle, "At the ear of Eve, familiar toad, Half-froth, half-venom, spits himself abroad." By innuendo, by demanding full particulars in circumstances where dishonesty is not rationally chargeable, *The Observer* has disagreeably intimated dishonesty. The *Sunday Times* reporters, by prevaricating, appear to have practised it. Oman is an assassin's private firing-range, notable only for the numbers willing to go and fire off a volley there.

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UPON SUCH SPARS of driftwood nothing will be constructed. But the trouble Mrs Thatcher is in is real, and does not concern such flotsam. The government has run out of novelty at precisely the moment when it has also run out of original ideas. The great strength of the first Thatcher administration (in spite of colossal blunders like acceptance of the Clegg Report which cost the economy £3 billions) was that it darkly understood that for inflation to come down and for us ever to be serious producers again, expenditure would have to be cut. Or, failing sufficient cuts, the full sum of that money would have to be taken out of the economy by tax.

In the budget of 1981, whose importance simply may not be underestimated, an approximate £5 billions was taken, and the Prime Minister is alleged to have told her Chancellor to raise the standard rate of income tax if necessary! The thinking wing of the Conservative Party, the people with ideas, won a battle over the toddlers-on. The small circle of creative intelligence actually defeated not just "the Wets", but the sort of Tory mind which thinks in terms of "goodies for the voters and tax cuts for people like us." The logical progression for a Party willing to go so far was to examine public spending, not maliciously or in the manner of golf-club wisdom about "not cosseting the lower classes", but as a rational inspection of what is done, what it costs, and what is necessary.

There ought still to be such an examination but not for the purpose of facilitating tax cuts, which are nice for those in receipt of them and whose effect on the economy, except where they are made on the lowest incomes, rests entirely in the land of rhetoric. Such changes should be made because public spending is actually higher than it was in 1979. Some of this expenditure derives from unemployment pay, but by no means all. What does one say of an abolition of a tier of National Health Service administration which actually leaves us with more people on the pay roll?

The Government made all sorts of fierce murmurs (one can put it no higher) back in the summer; and the Labour Opposition, on their way to the worst defeat since 1918, feebly protested at a "secret manifesto" which would assault the Health Service. It was good electioneering from 14 percentage points behind in the opinion polls; and Mrs Thatcher did what she does so often—she made a pledge. "The National Health Service is safe with us", she said. Provided that a just and equitable service was preserved, such a promise ought not to have been made. The Health Service is overmanned, lopsided, heavy in the water with administration, and the despair of the Department of Health. Getting it right will involve an element of charging for those who can afford hospital accommodation, an element of de-manning among manual staff and the creation of a command structure where the brain directs the hand.

Instead we have a few hapless choppings perfunctorily aimed, in a rush to save money, and invariably at the wrong targets—cottage hospitals, life-support machines, kidney units. Objects of affection and necessity go to it in a show of self-immolating insensitivity. The Health Service needs and deserves a long, reflective examination from twenty paces back, followed by a humane, thoughtful and considered reconstruction so that money is spent on the right things.

Failure in this area demonstrates the way in which the Government is stalled. It can't cut and it can't create. It is ceasing to be radical. Such silent failures are more important than petty blunders—the drab speeches of Sir Geoffrey Howe, the muddle over Grenada, or even (just) the downright disastrous and foolish attack at the Cheltenham Intelligence Centre (GCHQ) on the wrong unions in the wrong place. It is even arguable that such pieces of febrile activity are the products of frustration. The Government's rage and sense of impotence is being vented on the amiable Alistair Graham and the Civil and Public Services Union at Cheltenham, out of a sort of angry despair. That decree was rightly compared by John Gorst, a Tory back-bencher, with the Test Acts which in the 18th century excluded Roman Catholics and Nonconformist Protestants from public life because they were not trusted to act as loyal citizens.

But Cheltenham, which I do not apologise for touching upon a second month running, is more than that. It illustrates the other flaw in government—a narrow, unsubtle legalism which, provided that an equation can be juggled on paper, stiffly declines to notice the response of people with eyes and ears. Mrs Thatcher boasted of her majority and of the lack of numbers among the Social Democrats who took the matter of GCHQ to the division lobbies (as Labour feared to do). But does she really suppose, as the polls turn against her, that wars may not be lost by just such an abuse and flaunting of power? Humility is not a strong suit in politicians, but the instinct not to put one's head over the parapet often is. Indeed, the same Mrs Thatcher now playing Herod Antipas to clerks and translators, ran clean away from the miners three years ago when she feared their strength . . . and grossly over-assessed it. That retreat cost another billion on the wrong side of the equation.

I have not forgotten watching poor luckless David Howell put up to announce the Government's retreat—and incidentally their failure to make another just and proper cut in expenditure when we failed to close pits which were as heavily subsidised as any Suffolk barley-baron on the sweet end of the Common Agricultural Policy. Though now, with Ian MacGregor appointed to the Coal Board, action looks likely to be taken and one can see Mrs Thatcher, having made a second essay, getting the credit on the rebound.

Even so a stalled central policy, personal arrogance and an excess of caution (the same caution which pledged the Clegg spending) seem to me far more useful charges against the Prime Minister than most of the metaphysical froth which has been spun out of banana skins, much as the Laputans distilled moonbeams from cucumbers.

LET US PAUSE at that arrogance. Mrs Thatcher is not an unattractive person and she has plenty to take credit for. Arrogance is not, in fact, quite the exact word for her. She has a stubbornness which pursues a mistake as certainly as a correct decision. I cannot think of any other politician with the moral courage to outface the blackmail of the IRA hunger strikers. She remembered that she was dealing with murderers or their runners; and rightly believed that no pressure should be contemplated, whether from America,

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other foreign countries, her colleagues, or the Marsh Tories who think and breathe in time to the drumroll of a measured retreat.

She was tried and not found wanting in any respect. Yet that same stubbornness has been turned on Cheltenham Civil Servants, when a concession giving her every conceivable acquiescence from the unions—an enomous political *coup*, for heaven's sake—was available to her. It was an alpha in mismanagement, but one finally determined by personality.

It is argued by Labour spokesmen, with no great degree of heavy sincerity, that what is wrong in this Cabinet is the absence of critics—people to disagree with her. Such people, Denis Healey implies, like the Princes in the Tower, seldom live long. This is heroic nonsense. Most of those now gone had behaved in a way which no other leader would have tolerated for eight weeks. And if Mrs Thatcher is a Robespierre of the Mountain despatching the Tories of the Marsh to a short function in the Place de la Révolution, why does she tolerate the long continuation in office of James Prior? His dreadful term in Northern Ireland has cost better men their lives, and has been an exercise in applied incapacity.

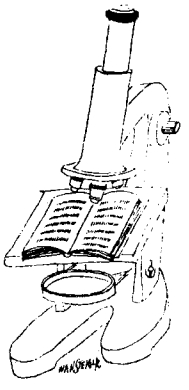
What should be said is that this government suffers from the inadequacy of too many of its members. The talent of most office-holders now is the talent of predictable, diligent functionaries. There is plenty of aggregate Intelligent Quotient about, but intelligence without political finger-tips or a clear driving purpose can actually be a disadvantage. Clausewitz, remember, ranked the intelligent but unimaginative officer below the comprehensively stupid man (who might do well in the field). Is it stupidity or lack of imagination which creates the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, a law which has chosen its year exquisitely? And indeed, as one listens to Mr Leon Brittan aridly rationalising, as no stupid man could, that which no imaginative man would want to, military metaphors jump up and scream. There is about some of Mrs Thatcher's subordinates that quality of sensibility which in 1917, if shown the correct documents from Headquarters, would dutifully have shot Nurse Cavell!

Liberty—the cause of human freedom—is, to put it mildly, a good thing. To aspire no higher than political self-interest, a piece of the equity in the libertarian cause, is a very helpful thing for a political party to have. By a congeries of circumstance and some lumbering, maladroit good intent, the British Conservative Party, for all the awful, snobbish, authoritarian fardels it bears, had managed by 1979 to lay hands on just such credit. Dry politics—light years from the Right-wing sort—gave the Tories a claim on libertarianism. They had it, and now they have it not.

Combine the alternating strength and weakness of the Prime Minister with the stalled policy on expenditure, and you have a battle lost among serious and unlikely but perhaps crucial allies which may be the first step to accelerating decline. The Government begins to be identified just with the occupancy of office, and is represented by flat unconvincing barrister's speeches from flat unconvincing barristers—like Patrick Jenkin and Leon Brittan, who argue that things are 3.78% better (or, as Mr Brittan would say, "bettah").

Compared with the Marsh Tories, sulking and resenting, and with Labour, unreformed on the hard issues and poised for reflation and blind disarmament, this is still the best government available by a very long way. But it has reached the stage where the defects of others rather than some central drive of its own constitute its chief strength. For the moment at least, Mrs Thatcher has lost her way and is waving her arms about. There are no rotten banana skins in sight but neither is there any very clear, straightforward path ahead.

"The Right Stuff"



VAST numbers of Americans have nothing better to do than pore through old books searching for previous usages of famous phrases.

Whenever these people see the words "coined by", they bristle at the presumption of authorship and are impelled to prove that somebody wrote it earlier. Such literary hawkshaws are members of the "Phrasedick Brigade", and do for previous usage what the "Squad Squad" does for redundancies.

Take **the right stuff**, *the phrase meaning a combination of ambition, determination and guts, used by Tom Wolfe as a book title a few years back. An earlier use, cited here, was by W. Somerset Maugham in 1927.*

That was not good enough for a correspondent from New York City, who happened to be perusing a short story by P. G. Wodehouse titled "The Awakening of Rollo Podmarsh", written between 1923 and 1926:

"There was, she considered, the right stuff in Rollo."

This was immediately eclipsed by "The Right Stuff", a political satire by Ian Hay published in 1909.

THEY *haven't even scratched the surface. Joseph Conrad uses the right stuff in this sense (motivation, skill) in his short story "Youth", published in 1902.*

"But they all worked. That crew of Liverpool hard cases had in them the right stuff."

I had just about closed out this file when an 1864 entry came in from Anthony Trollope's "The Small House at Allington", in which Lord DeGuest says proudly of his protégé:

"I knew he was made of the right stuff."

Wait—Here comes a letter that Herman Melville wrote to his first publisher, John Murray of London, in 1848, telling him how things were progressing with "Mardi": "The arrangement you propose for my next book is not altogether satisfactory to me. At the least, I should want the advance doubled." That's the right stuff, as every author will attest, but the citation occurs in the next sentence:

"It shall have the right stuff in it, to redeem its faults, tho' they were legion."

That's the winner; further entries will not be entertained in this century. If you spot it in your family Bible, keep it yourself.

William Safire

in the
INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE
(Paris)

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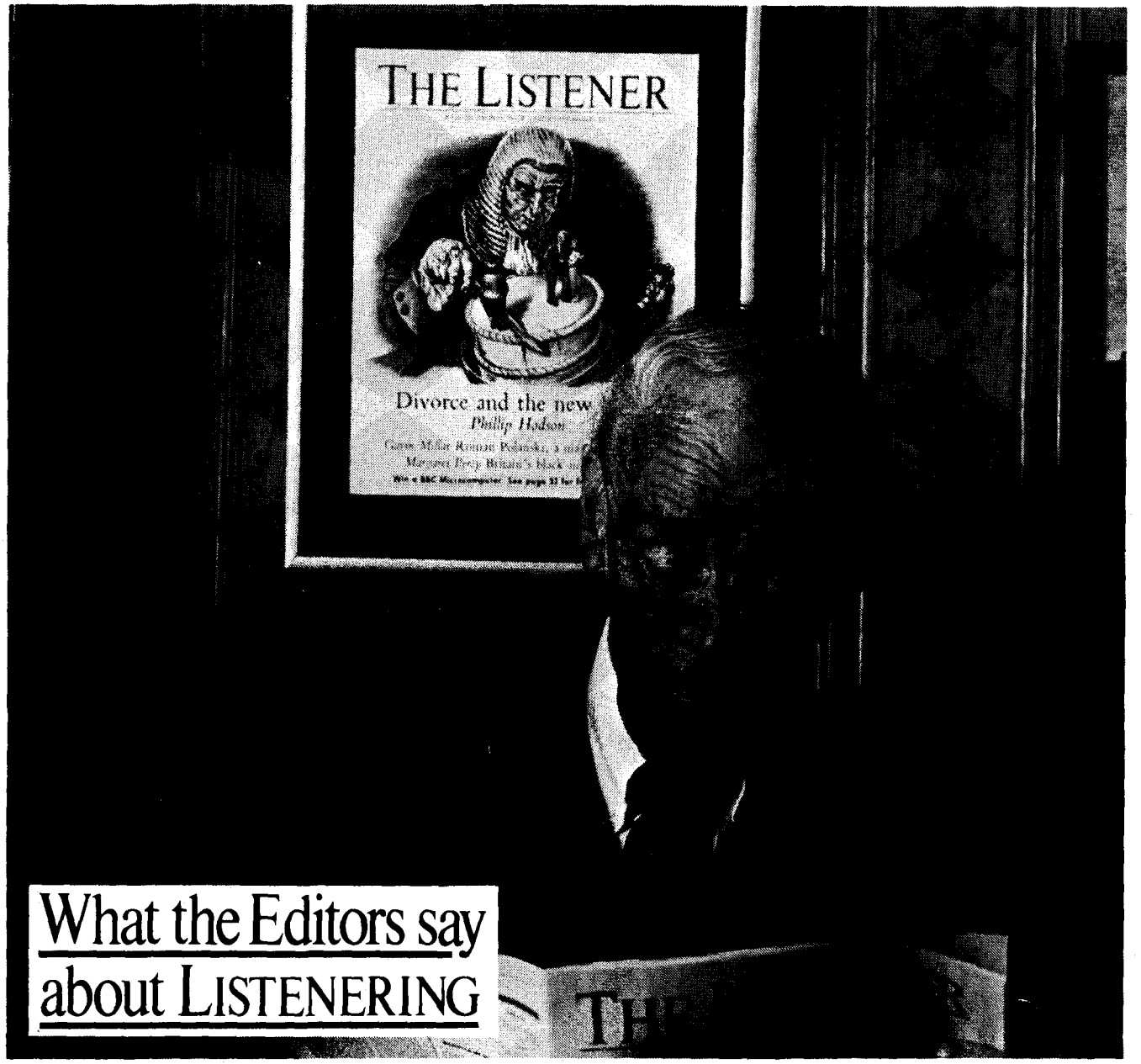

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Letter from Paris

The Real Louis & Elsa

By François Fejtö

THE STAR COUPLE of Communism's Paris-Moscow axis, Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet, stayed together for forty years, loyal colleagues in a mutual admiration society. They praised each other to the skies, and even rivalled that other famous pair, Sartre and de Beauvoir (perhaps a shade more human in their erring ways), especially in their invincible solidarity. Aragon and Triolet had more of a royal quality about them as well as being more enigmatic. I believe it called for a great deal of courage on the part of Dominique Desanti (the biographer of Drieu La Rochelle, *un de ces grands amis* whom Aragon betrayed) to embark on a demystification of the *couple-étoile*.[1] She has attempted to establish the truth about Louis and Elsa's relationship by collecting the evidence of people who were close to them: the linguist Roman Jacobson, for example, who knew Elsa as a child and as a young woman; Pierre Seghers; Pierre Daix; and François Nourrissier, among others. Dominique Desanti herself saw a good deal of the Aragons during the period 1934–50. "But I did not really know them", she admits: "I've learned a great deal about them through writing my book. . . ." We learn a great deal about them too.

Firstly, that they were not exactly a happy couple. "For forty-one years", Dominique Desanti writes, "Elsa lived within a love-hate relationship of which other people saw the roses but she felt the thorns. . . ." We also learn that the famous lines of *Les yeux d'Elsa* were not a celebration of love for Elsa Triolet; the "eyes" in question were those of quite another, unspecified, Elsa. Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet were play-acting. They were prevaricating to other people the whole time, and probably to themselves as well. What a contrast with Sartre and de Beauvoir, who for all their infidelities never went in for mendacious deception.

ELSA was born in Moscow on 12 September 1896. Her father, Yuri Kagan, was a lawyer of liberal views. In 1912 her beloved sister Lili married a young Bolshevik named Osip Brik, a future victim of the Stalinist purges. Lili also had an affair with Mayakovsky, the wild Russian poet who organised poetry evenings at which "Futurists" and advocates of traditional versification actually came to blows. In 1913, at the age of sixteen, Elsa was bowled over by the outlandish Mayakovsky, but he had eyes only for Lili.

Their whole milieu greeted the Revolution of 1917 with enormous excitement. Of all the close friends of the Kagan household only Boris Pasternak remained sceptical. "He has no feeling for history", was Ilya Ehrenburg's verdict. "He can hear a heart beating and the grass as it grows, but he has no ears for the sound of the century on the march." Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Culture, frequented the Café Discret where the poets met. He liked Mayakovsky but not the other Futurists.

Elsa got to know a young Frenchman, André Triolet, who was in Moscow as a member of a delegation. He was elegant, witty, and an enthusiastic yachtsman and angler; and Triolet hated the Revolution. In 1919 he left for Tahiti, but he returned in the following year and married Elsa, who had grown tired of a life of agitation and poverty. "I'm a Communist in my soul, but my body is a dreadful bourgeois" (*Je suis communiste dans l'âme mais terriblement bourgeois par le corps*), she said. She accompanied her husband to Tahiti but never felt at home there; she left him without illfeeling in 1920 and returned to Europe.

After a period in London, where she found her mother and her sister, Elsa went to live in Berlin, then the intellectual and artistic capital of the world and a haven for Russian revolutionaries of an intellectual rather than a political persuasion. There she met Malevich, Kandinsky, Archipenko, and her former lover Roman Jacobson. She began to write, sending her work to the doyen of revolutionary literature, Maxim Gorky, who gave her some encouragement. She revisited Moscow many times during the years 1924–27, trying to place manuscripts there. Life in the Soviet capital was still very difficult. Sergey Yesenin's suicide left her badly shaken. She saw Mayakovsky hurling himself with abandon into a life of hedonism. Elsa no longer felt at home in Moscow either, and she returned to Paris, staying first at a small hotel in the Place du Panthéon and later moving to the Istria Hotel in the Rue Campagne-Première in Montparnasse. Friends during this period included Picabia, Léger, Max Ernst, Marcel Duchamp, and Robert Desnos.

HER GREAT DAY came on 6 November 1928, when at five o'clock in the evening, in the café called La Coupôle, she met Louis Aragon. Then thirty, he had been a member of the Communist Party for a year, as had several of his Surrealist friends, notably Paul Eluard and André Breton. In 1926 he had published what is perhaps his best work, *Le Paysan de Paris*. Elsa was dazzled by his intelligence, his talent, his stylish elegance. Her one desire was to make a conquest of him; and having done so she proceeded with stubborn determination to hang on to him for life. Ideology had no part in this at first. Elsa once asked Thirion, a Surrealist friend of Aragon's and one of the first historians of Surrealism:

> "How can you be a Communist? The Revolution is an appalling phenomenon. In 1917 I detested the Bolsheviks, and I don't much like them now. Lenin didn't understand Mayakovsky or modern painting."

[1] Dominique Desanti, *Les clés d'Elsa (Aragon-Triolet)*, Editions Ramsay (Paris, 1983).

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For Elsa, Moscow was above all the friends she had left there: Babel, Mayakovsky, and a few others. She would have liked Aragon to become the French Mayakovsky. On 14 April 1930 Mayakovsky put a bullet through his heart. Elsa mourned him, but she made an astonishingly quick recovery. She got some Moscow friends who had contacts with the authorities to arrange for Aragon and Sadoul—an ex-sailor and a founder-member of the French Communist Party—to be invited to the Kharkov Writers' Congress. Aragon was probably unaware that the purpose of the congress was to inaugurate the Party's stranglehold on cultural life and to bring art back to the fold of convention. Elsa's purpose was to prise Aragon away from André Breton, whose personal charm and force of intellect had held him captive for more than ten years. Aragon found Henri Barbusse—who with Gorky was the idol of the Soviet Communists—a crashing bore. Elsa tried to bring them together. "She was clearer about many things than I was myself", Aragon admitted later. He was enchanted by the "*chaleur fraternelle*", the "fraternal warmth" that prevailed among the Russian writers at Kharkov. Elsa on the other hand saw the intrigues, the envy, the fear. "Louis experienced a kind of excitement in the USSR that I have never known in him since", she was to say twenty years later. At Kharkov she made great strides towards her goal: Aragon put his name to a declaration in which he dissociated himself from "social-democratic, counter-revolutionary Trotskyism" and agreed in future to subject his literary activity to Party control.

It was a total commitment, and the split with Breton was not long in coming. Moreover Elsa made sure that commitment never weakened. She explained everything to him; she put everything into perspective for him, including the first Moscow Trials directed against the "industrialists" who were "trying to restore capitalism." Louis believed all Elsa told him, and he denounced the "guilty ones" in verse. The accomplice of Apollinaire and Lautréamont became an accomplice of the *GPU*, of the authorities who put Osip Mandelstam on the black list. Joining the staff of *L'Humanité*, he eulogised Barbusse and Gorky to the point where Elsa poked fun at his neophyte's zeal. At the 1934 Writers' Congress in Moscow Aragon accepted without flinching the doctrine, set forth by Fadeyev, of a "socialist realism" that "must show man not as he is but as he is to become."

The year 1936 brought a sense of crisis in Parisian literary circles. André Gide was disappointed at the Moscow trials, which he said were "as odious as the *Reichstag* trial." Aragon for his part had faith in Soviet justice. When the journalist Koltsov, a friend of the Aragons, was recalled to Moscow he had a premonition that he would not be coming back:

> "Remember, the last thing you heard me say was that Stalin is always right. (*La dernière chose que vous avez entendu du moi, rappelez-vous, c'est que Stalin a toujours raison*)."

He fortified the Aragons in their stand.

In February 1939 Louis and Elsa were married. Elsa published her novel, *Bonsoir Thérèse*, which she had written in secret, afraid not so much of Aragon's judgment as of his jealousy. Curiously, the first review of the novel to appear in the French press was written by Jean-Paul Sartre. The announcement of the Russo-German pact in the autumn of the same year plunged another member of the *L'Humanité* staff, Paul Nizan, into despair; he resigned from the Party. Aragon's verdict: "The Pact has averted war. . . ." A few weeks later he was called up an an auxiliary medical officer. Elsa seized on her role as the wife of a soldier on active service. After the armistice the couple settled in Nice, where following Russia's entry into the war Aragon organised an underground national committee of writers. It was at this time that certain unadmitted associations on Louis' part almost caused the break-up of their marriage. "I can't go on", Elsa told her confidant, Seghers.

"Neo-Communists"

London

At a recent *dinner party in Washington, a Reaganite politician referred in passing to the black radical, Angela Davis, as "a Communist." This provoked instant outrage. It was denounced as "McCarthyism" of the most rabid kind. How could Europeans respect American politicians if they resorted to such paranoid slurs, etc.?*

But the Reaganite was unmoved. He had called Prof. Davis a Communist, he said, because she was a member of the American Communist Party and, indeed, had been its candidate for the Vice-Presidency in the last election. This reply left his opponents silent but resentful. It was felt to be somehow unfair, as if to call someone a Communist was a sort of criminal libel for which truth was no defence.

This terminological problem of "Communism" is discussed in Charles Elwell's fascinating pamphlet "Tracts Beyond the Times". Mr Elwell lists and analyses 69 revolutionary left-wing publications. Only a few of them—mainly those published by the Communist Party itself—admit to Communist affiliations. Most have inspirational titles like "*Class Struggle*," "*Proletarian*" or "*Big Flame*." But their general tendency is, with varying degrees of discretion, to employ standard Marxist-Leninist concepts like the dictatorship of the proletariat or a workers' vanguard party. And they seek to establish an irreversible socialist State.

In other words, they are Communist publications. But the word "Communist" is never used of them. That is applied only to members of the Communist Party and, increasingly, not even to them. Instead, the magazines are called by a number of euphemisms—"Marxist" "Trotskyist", and the 57 varieties of "Left" (extreme, far, broad, etc.). And this is greatly to their advantage since the general public has a clear and justified hostility to Communism and Communists.

Can we rescue *"Communism" from the libel lawyers?*

I suggest the term "neo-Communist" which is copied from the American neologism "neo-conservative." "Neo-conservative" means quite simply, conservative. All that the "neo-" signifies is that the person so described does not belong to a particular established group of traditional conservatives.

Similarly, a neo-Communist would not necessarily belong to the Communist Party of Great Britain. He would merely be a Communist in all essential respects.

John O'Sullivan
Daily Telegraph (*London*)

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"There's no such thing as happiness in love", Aragon bewailed. Then the crisis was over.

After the Liberation the couple appeared on platforms united and triumphant, a symbol of everlasting love. Winner of the *Prix Goncourt* in 1947, always dressed in the latest fashions, Elsa held court at the *Maison de la Pensée française* at 2 rue de l'Elysée, where she presided over the drawing-up of the black list of collaborationist writers. It was the apotheosis; yet Pierre Daix, returning from Mauthausen, was surprised to find Elsa and Louis bitter and cut off. "*Ma vie de femme est finie*", Elsa disclosed to him; but their private life must not be allowed to interfere with their official role. Elsa must see to it that Louis did not deviate from the straight-and-narrow, did not give in to pressure from his nonconformist friends. Picasso did not like Elsa, and she knew it. He accused her of pushing her husband in the direction of socialist realism.

In 1956, in the wake of Khrushchev's "secret speech", the Aragons fought their last great fight to save the face of the USSR and the French Communist Party. Aragon had the effrontery to reply, when challenged by Claude Roy: "We're not executioners, we're victims. (*Nous ne sommes pas des bourreaux, nous sommes des victimes.*)" Had not the members of Elsa's family, had not many of his own great friends been persecuted? In the eyes of many French Communist intellectuals, the Aragons were more guilty than the Party's leaders.

Elsa died in 1968; Aragon lived on for another thirteen years without her. He could be found in the St Germain quarter, free of his "harsh, exacting, *épouse-soeur maternelle*, his hated sister-wife, his accomplice and his shield", surrounded by a crowd of young men wearing make-up and scent. The secret was out that had caused Elsa so much suffering. According to those who knew her well, she suffered even more from the "greater misfortune of having neither country nor language." Yet Elsa's command of French was excellent; she was a writer to be taken seriously—some say a better novelist than Aragon. Her greatest misfortune, it seems, was to have been doomed to play the part of the fulfilled woman on the arm of a man whose heart was elsewhere.

North China

A man is walking, or appears to walk,
Rapidly backwards into the lit town
Beyond the darkening platform, where a crust
Of light encases him in the dust
Of his own translucence, his head a stalk
Beside our furious clatter.
  These things will cease to matter.

A stutter of pale boards, the names of sleep:
How soon the semiology of shape
And dying fall takes over. Neither past
Nor future, we discover here a lost
Continent of moments, whose elegy
Begins with a drowsy numbness.
  Such continents are nameless.

A city in the extreme north of China
Freezes each year to fifty below zero.
It has an enormous Culture Park where snow
Becomes a polished lawn and festivals
Of sculpture feature houses with ice walls
Embedding bits of china
  Crowned with ice antennae.

Such baroque, such opulence, such darkness.
We're on the edge of all that's frozen, formal,
Furious and unattainable.
The great fantastic trains, like twists of barley,
Go nosing forward rather eerily.
Even a good marriage
  Is more than half a mirage.

George Szirtes

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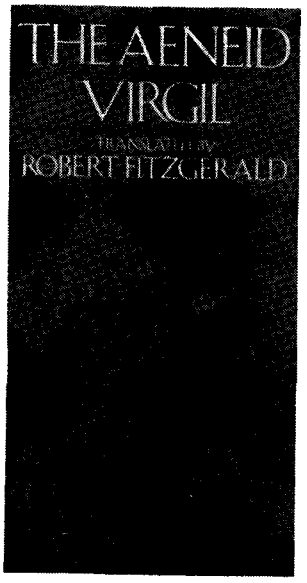
A Tale of Three Cities

Virgil's "Aeneid"—By GEORGE STEINER



LEAVING NAZI GERMANY, the eminent classicist Eduard Fraenkel observed that one of the symptoms of Germany's apartness from European civility was the fact that Virgil and his *Aeneid* had played only a small part in the history of German literature and consciousness. Fraenkel could not know that within a few years of his pronouncement there would spring from within the German language one of the profoundest metamorphic readings and re-enactments of Virgil. But Hermann Broch's *The Death of Virgil* is, of course, the invention of an Austrian, of a Jew, and of a vision of inhumanity and the ambiguous status of art brought on, precisely, by the seeming triumph of Nazism. Nevertheless, Fraenkel's point is well taken. German classicism and neo-classicism are essentially Homeric, Pindaric, and Sophoclean. The re-creative fantasies and auguries of German classical scholarship and of the poetry which, from Klopstock and Hölderlin to Rilke, has been the live counterpart to this scholarship, turn instinctively to Troy and Mycenae, to Sparta and to Delphi. The foremost Latin presence in German sensibility has been that of Tacitus.

In contrast, it is (so far as the domain of the Romance languages goes, but also in respect of certain elements and periods in English history) Virgil who constitutes the core of recognition, the centre of religious, civic and stylistic reference. Generally, and until the romantic revaluations of the archaic, of the remotely impassioned, Homer is sighted through Virgil. The celebrated allegorical interpretation of the Fourth Eclogue, an interpretation which gradually extends to the notion of *pietas* in the *Aeneid*, makes of Virgil not only the necromancer of a Medieval and early Renaissance folk tradition, but the clairvoyant, divinely animated herald of Christ's coming and renovation of time. Our almost unthinking transfer of concepts and images of the organic, of a destined ramification out of deep and sanctified roots, to the sphere of politics, to the architecture of the state, are Virgilian. The tale of three cities which makes up the *Aeneid*—Troy, Carthage, Rome—the promise of empire which is the life-spring of the poem, penetrate and quicken Western political theory and the vocabulary of our civic and national institutions. Where politics shades into ritual, where "urbanity" is set in the light of historical destiny, as in the "Augustan" practices of the 17th and 18th centuries or in the ceremonies of Napoleonic and Victorian imperialism, the foundations are, by virtue of canonic precedent and simile, Virgilian. It is in the explicit image of Virgil that Western European literatures after Rome formulate their non-dramatic genres. From Dante to Tasso, from Spenser to Dryden, Tennyson and T. S. Eliot, from Ronsard to Valéry, the European pastoral, idyll, poetry of intimate or public mourning, of political allegory and argument, of national epic, is mimetic of Virgil. More than any other poet except the Psalmist, Virgil has been "translated" into subsequent literatures, not in the guise of immediate transcription, but in that of internal echo. Dante, Leopardi, Lamartine, Tennyson are masters of this Virgilian note inside their own specific music. This same undercurrent note is played with and against in the elegiac stoicism of Robert Lowell's "My Last Afternoon with Uncle Devereux Winslow."

Fraenkel's discrimination aims at the relative absence (relative if only because of the significant pointers to Virgil in Goethe and Schiller) from German political, spiritual constants of such markers as *pietas, communitas, civitas* in their specific Virgilian tenor. In consequence, German history and the national culture would lack the particular congruence of classicism and Christianity, of urbanity and public power, which throughout the rest of Western Europe was achieved, certainly so far as its mythological and symbolic energies go, in the name of Virgil and under the *auctoritas* of the *Aeneid*. More especially, the Lutheran Reformation lacked that leaven of Virgilian *humanitas,* of visionary conservatism, which tempers the doctrines of John Calvin as it does those of Edmund Burke. An obsessive immersion in the Homeric, the distortion of Homeric heroics under pressure of a vengeful, archaising nationalism, helped to bring on a brazen ferocity.

Yet it is precisely the terrors of 1933–45 and their tidal aftermath which, more than any other agency, have replaced the *Aeneid* at the focus of literary and literary-political recognition. Notwithstanding Simone Weil's poignant but perverse reading, the *Iliad* is a celebration of warfare. It blazes

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with the conviction that personal combat, however savage, the clash of homicidal weapons, the wild inebriation of hand-to-hand encounter, are the necessary features of the excellence of man. Like Heraclitus, the Homer of the *Iliad* instructs us that *polemos*, the agonistic beat of battle, is master and, indeed, creator of things. In the *Iliad* world, moments of peace are an armistice, an interlude between seasons of glory. The *Odyssey*, composed, I believe, by the poet who had assembled, who had "edited" into shape the oral material of the *Iliad*, is a more critical, complex picture of life. There are, in Odysseus' meeting with the shade of man-killing Achilles in the underworld, incipient challenges to the agonistic ideals of the earlier epic. New privacies of pain and the pathos of domesticity unfold. But the politics of the world of Odysseus, the supernaturalism (part fairy-tale, part heroic saga), the exultant savagery of the homecoming, are not ours. Even at the nadir of his fortunes, the son of Laertes remains a superman in (frequently) transparent disguise, a Sinbad the Sailor (as Joyce will have it). He is not, in our sense, a displaced person, a refugee.

THE AENEID IS THE EPIC OF the refugee, the lasting portrayal of those made homeless, *apatride*, migrant on the face of the earth in the wake of political catastrophe. The laying waste of Troy which, in the Western imagination, prefigures the burning of all great cities since, is narrated not by Homer but by Virgil. In their fortunes, the men and women in the *Aeneid* are, in the majority, thrice defeated. Observe the contrapuntal themes of ruin in the destinies of Troy, of Dido—implying as it does the later annihilation of Carthage itself—and in the rout of Turnus and the people of Latium. Such emphasis on the vanquished is non-Homeric. It speaks directly to our current condition. So does Virgil's profoundly troubled exposition of the conflicts between the anarchic, sensory claims of private impulse, and the abstract imperatives of ideology (Imperial Latinity, as Virgil expounds it in the sovereign prophecies of Book VI, *is* ideological). If the night sortie of Nisus and Euryalus, in Book IX, forms the emotional pivot of the epic, it is because here, perhaps only here and at the hands of death, the conflict of the personal and the political is reconciled. James Joyce's recourse to Homer, Hermann Broch's to Virgil, do seem to divide between them two phases in the self-perceptions of modern Western sentiment. Joyce's wanderers are exiles, homeward-bound at nightfall as is Odysseus/Ulysses. *The Death of Virgil* was written by a stateless refugee, by one who, like Aeneas, knew that his native land had been made ash and could be revisited solely in the hurt of remembrance—*renovare dolorem*.

IT IS, one supposes, these suggestions of actuality, this genius of relevance renewed, which account for the number and quality of recent translations of the *Aeneid*. Among these are the versions of Rolfe Humphries (1951), by C. Day Lewis (1952), and the prose rendition published by W. F. Jackson Knight in 1956. A contrastive look at such recent French translations and adaptations as Klossowski's *Eneide* and the *Eneide d'après Virgile* of Denis Guenoun would be illuminating.

It was Ezra Pound who launched the view that Gavin Douglas's *Bukes of Eneados of the Famose Poete Virgill* in 15th-century Scots surpassed all English versions since. Pound's encomium has been taken up time and again, but principally on the basis of brief extracts. Gavin Douglas's "Aeneid" is, indeed, a tumultous and often masterly reading. As a whole, it is accessible mainly to the scholar. English "Aeneids" are inwoven with the history of the language. They include Surrey's version of 1574: a rendition of the first four books by Stanyhurst in 1582; by Denham in 1636; Waller and Godolphin's translation of Book IV in 1658. Though he, like Pope, ridiculed Ogilby's *Aeneid* "in heroic verse" (1649), Dryden in fact drew on it for his own triumphant Virgil published in 1697. Consciously or not, it is against Dryden that subsequent "Aeneids" in English, such as William Morris's in 1875, have sought to measure themselves.

The Dryden text was reissued in 1964 with a preface by the American poet, translator, and teacher of rhetoric, Robert Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald echoes Ezra Pound's judgment as to the pre-eminence of Gavin Douglas. If Milton is, among English poets, "most capable of the full Virgilian range", the translators most concordant with the spirit and practices of the original would have been Keats or Tennyson. It is they who could have given to the language the consummate *Aeneid* which it lacks. Writing in 1964, Fitzgerald sees Dryden's as the best translation available to an English-language reader. No doubt, Dryden labours under the constraint of a particular ideal of the rhymed couplet, imitative of the French alexandrine. Virgil's patient, deep-breathing "architectonics" and the "depth of suggestion" in his poised, unfolding imagery often elude Dryden's robust pace. But at its best, the Dryden version has "a whiplike power of statement, swift and flexible but weighted", greater, more constant, than that achieved by any of its numerous rivals. The Latinity in natural reach of John Dryden's sensibility and poetics is ours no longer.

Fitzgerald has translated Sophocles, Euripides, and Homer. His *Odyssey* is one of the most widely-admired translations from the classics in our time. He is himself a poet who has written *A Wreath for the Sea* and whose versions of St John Perse are instinct with motifs of exile, of marine voyages and the pathos of empire. It is, for once, not a cliché on a publisher's blurb to say that Robert Fitzgerald's *Aeneid* [1] has been awaited with great interest and anticipation.

Any reviewer of a serious translation, let alone of a work of this scope, has to get certain platitudes out of the way.

It is one of the grim anomalies of the translator's métier (in literary translation above all) that his performance will be scrutinised most closely, most censoriously, by precisely those for whom it is, in a sense, least intended or useful—the critics, readers, or rivals who already are familiar with the original. Secondly, any translation from a classic, from a major text in the syllabus, invites comparison with preceding versions. It does so implicitly, but also by virtue of the fact that a serious translator is performing a critique of his forerunners, that his

[1] *The Aeneid*. By VIRGIL. Translated by ROBERT FITZGERALD. Random House, $20.00; Harvill Press, £12.50.

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own text will seek out and recast what he takes to be the errors, infidelities, failures of psychological or technical penetration in earlier translations. Yet even as he enacts his corrections, amendments and critical revaluations, the translator, if he is fully alive to his "transmissive" status, knows that the translation which he is now making must itself be challenged and superseded. There are no translations "for ever", albeit a masterpiece of transfer—Pope's *Iliad,* the Schlegel and Tieck Shakespeare, Mallarmé's Poe or Pound's *Cathay*—will enter literature in its own right. A good translation is rooted in its time and context of reference and of linguistic feeling. We retranslate the canonic books almost with each generation just because the relations of need, of perception, of recognition as between the source and our current reception are in constant motion. And every worthwhile translation, in turn, adds to the presence, to the live resonance of the original, "that which was already there." But this means that even the most radically innovative of translations of, say, Homer or Virgil or Scripture or Dante, is, inevitably, a translation of previous translations, a struggle upstream through a gallery of mirrors.

Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson could postulate as self-evident that a successful translation is one in which Pindar, or Homer, or Virgil is made to sound as he would have had he been a lyric or epic poet composing in English at the close of the 17th or the start of the 18th centuries. From a neo-classical point of view, genius in invention and formal means is synchronic. It is native, in essence and unaltered, to all "civilised" taste. This exemplary stability, in fact, defines the "classic." The modern approach to the Greek and Latin classics has lost this confident innocence, even as our general literacy has lost its more or less unforced acquaintance with the learned tongues. The epistemology of translations, this is to say the study of the obstacles, of the shifting relativities, of the accommodations of decipherment and of empathy, which intervene between a 20th-century mind and an Homeric, Virgilian, or Biblical "speech act", has become highly self-conscious. The question as to whether it is possible to "understand" authentically, let alone retransmit and re-phrase verifiably, any semantic structure, any text, out of a temporally, culturally or ideologically remote context, has taken on severe philosophic, psychological and linguistic aspects. Thinkers, re-thinkers out of the "present past" such as Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger have made of hermeneutics (the methodical inquiry into the acts of understanding) the centre of their philosophies of language and of culture. Racine's tranquil assertion that the mere success of his *Iphigénie* demonstrates the identity of taste and of emotional response between the audience in the theatre of Dionysus in ancient Athens and that of Paris and of Versailles in 1674, now seems to us as almost pre-lapsarian.

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Catholicism. His *Aeneid* is, necessarily, that of a man who has spent long years of his life translating Homer, of a reader of Virgil for whom the persistent lives of the two Homeric epics inside the *Aeneid* have a special pressure and annunciation. At the same time, Fitzgerald is a teacher in an America in which a knowledge of classical languages and mythology, of Dante and the Virgilian dynamics in English and American literature, from Chaucer to Lowell, has receded far from the common pulse of even literate awareness. At every point, moreover, whether consciously or not, Fitzgerald is part of the philosophic-linguistic turn towards uncertainty and inhibition in regard to the nature and possibilities of literary translation which marks the current climate. Every one of these personal and cultural circumstances will enter into his *Aeneid,* and into that which the reader will observe through Fitzgerald's refractions. For Fitzgerald sings not so much of "arms and the man" as he does of a distant man of myths whose "battles long ago" (itself a Virgilian tag) have come down to us through the echo-chambers of the Latin, Italian, and English languages and their several masters.

DRYDEN'S CHALLENGES, addressed to himself, stand no less for a 20th-century translator—Virgil

> ". . . is everywhere elegant, sweet, and flowing in his hexameters. His words are not only chosen, but the places in which he ranks them for the sound. He who removes them from the station wherein their master set them spoils the harmony . . . they must be read in order as they lie; the least breath discomposes them; and somewhat of their divinity is lost."
>
> "He [Virgil] studies brevity more than any other poet: but he had the advantage of a language wherein much may be comprehended in a little space."
>
> "For Virgil, above all poets, had a stock, which I may call almost inexhaustible, of figurative, elegant, and sounding words. I, who inherit but a small portion of his genius and write in a language so much inferior to the Latin, have found it very painful to vary phrases, when the same sense returns upon me."

(In this last sentence, of course, "painful" signifies "laborious" and exigent of exact effort.)

Two compelling motions confront a translator of the *Aeneid.* The epic-descriptive narration proceeds by tonal blocs, by extended paragraphs whose organisation and tactics of impetus are primarily acoustic. (Broch's structural imitation of a string quartet in *The Death of Virgil* is a justifiable conceit.) Different "movements" in the poem and within its successive books have differing rhythmic-vocalic registers. More, it would seem, than any other writer, Virgil succeeded in attaching to musical values, such as cadence, thematic variation, effects of counterpoint, those articulations of logical relation, of specific suggestion, of designation which, naturally, attach to language. Throughout the *Aeneid* (to paraphrase Claudel), "the reading eye listens."

The second motion is one of condensation around local clusters of imagery, simile, and metaphor. Where Homer is "formulaic", constructing his great sweep of narrative by means of "ready-made" and "invariant", though in their insertion flexible, phrases and epic tags (presumably oral in their origin), Virgil is "nodal." Precisely, incisively observed images, motifs of pastoral, marine or civic situations and crafts, in-gather, as it were, the surrounding energies of the text. They concentrate these energies like pedal-points, momentarily arresting but, at the same time, regenerating the chordal, tidal advance of the imperial tale. Unavoidably, the translator is caught between two claims and temptations: that of the "orchestral" forward-motion on the major scale, as we find it in Milton and in Berlioz's metamorphoses of Virgil in *Les Troyens*; and that, no less inspired, of the compacted tonal, pictorial, argumentative felicities of the single line or set of lines. It is this latter temptation to which Tennyson succumbs with such mastery. No English poet has, I think, matched, over any length, the co-existence and interplay of these two motions. (Ll.282-376 in Book II of the 1805 version of Wordsworth's *Prelude* may come closest to being a just counterpart to the spirit of form in Virgil.)

The other evident problem for a translator is the undeniable break in imaginative pressure, in executive invention, after Book VI. There are supremacies—such as Allecto's infernal voyage and intervention in Book VII, such as the Nisus-Euryalus episode in Book IX (itself almost an epic of lament within the epic), or such as Camilla in battle in Book XI, a motif without which we might lack much in Renaissance art, music, and poetry. But Dryden's humorous anguish is justified: "What had become of me if Virgil had taxed me with another book? I had certainly been reduced to pay the public in hammered money, for want of milled. . . ." Reiterations do multiply. The Homeric precedent, in respect of the rhetoric of war-councils, the actual narratives of the fighting and, above all, of the death of (Hector)-Turnus, grows heavy. Tradition has it that Virgil would, had he lived, have made revisions. Robert Fitzgerald's admonition—"The attitude conveyed by Virgil's whole narrative of the war in Latium is cumulative and very complex" and aims at a "massive effect of tragic ambiguity"—is enlightening, but not wholly persuasive. It is as if Dido's unforgiving flight from Aeneas in the underworld—

> *illa solo fixos oculos aversa tenebat*
> *nec magis incepto vultum sermone movetur*
> *quam si dura silex aut stet Marpesia cautes.*
> *tandem corripuit sese atque inimica refugit*
> *in nemus umbriferum, coniunx ubi pristinus illi*
> *respondet curis aequatque Sychaeus amorem—*

in ll.469-74 of Book VI had, indeed, taken from the poem, from that which was to make Aeneas immortal, a prodigal magic. How does Fitzgerald translate the passage? (The only responsible way of "reviewing" a translation is, unfortunately, the pedestrian, fragmenting look at "gobbets.")

> *But she had turned*
> *With gaze fixed on the ground as he spoke on,*
> *Her face no more affected than if she were*
> *Immobile granite or Marpesian stone.*
> *At length she flung away from him and fled,*
> *His enemy still, into the shadowy grove*
> *Where he whose bride she once had been, Sychaeus,*
> *Joined in her sorrows, and returned her love.*

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Seven-and-one-half lines to the original six. "Flung away" is expressive, but already present in both C. Day Lewis and Jackson Knight: "into the shadowy grove" does not really capture the nuance of the Virgilian "into a grove which offered her a protective shadow." Dryden's "*Whirl'd away, to shun his hateful sight,/Hid in the forest and the shades of night*" is also somewhat inflationary, but finely correspondent to the dynamics and intentions of the original.

The crux is Virgil's *aequatque*. No transfer into English has succeeded in appropriating the concentrated pathos, the moral finesse of the term. Sychaeus, whose remembrance and shadow the Trojan Queen had abandoned in her passion for Aeneas, now responds, as equal to equal, in equal grace of pardon and grief, to Dido's loving return. It is this parity in death which excludes Aeneas, which makes of *him* the brazen shade. The delicate rigour of Virgil's meaning is vital in the syntax and in the economy of the mere naming of Sychaeus. Fitzgerald's "bride" strikes one as subtly awry; here it is the conjugal, the righteously domestic which counts.

IT IS FROM THE PALINURUS PASSAGES, at the close of Book V, that Western literature, art, and music derive a very special legacy of somnambular, ornamental melancholy. It is via this legacy that we decode, as we do, the twilit arcadias of Watteau, the night-pieces of Mozart, or Keats's "drowsiness." In this sea-drenched episode, moreover, Virgil seems to be focusing our attention both on the rhythmic pulse, on the great undertow of the sea as these enact his narrative pace, and on the luminous, singular touches of detail "above" the general motion. The vocalic wonder of the original has passed into the underlying, talismanic repertoire of Western poetry:

> *vix primus inopina quies laxaverat artus,*
> *et super incumbens cum puppis parte revulsa*
> *cumque gubernaclo liquidas proiecit in undas*
> *praecipitem ac socios nequiquam saepe vocantem;*
> *ipse volans tenuis se sustulit ales ad auras.*

The immense challenge to the translator is the fusion of dream-like, slow-motion gentleness with brusque violence. It is sleep incarnate which thrusts sleeping Palinurus overboard, as in the arrested choreography of a dream. But here the waking is death. Dryden's "*The god, insulting with superior strength, / Fell heavy on him, plung'd him in the sea*" produces the immediacy of the supernatural, but nothing of the trance-like mood. But his "*The victor daemon mounts obscure in air*" is memorable. The god "shoves him" (Humphries) rings desperately false. Day Lewis's "hurled" and Jackson Knight's "flung him" translate *proiecit* with a directness which makes it difficult to recapture the muted, "unreal" desolation of the Latin. Now Fitzgerald:

> *Now see the god, his bough*
> *A-drip with Lethe's dew, and slumberous*
> *With Stygian power, giving it a shake*

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Over the pilot's temples, to unfix,
Although he fought it, both his swimming eyes.
His unexpected drowse barely begun,
Somnus leaned over him and flung him down
In the clear water, breaking off with him
A segment of the stern and steering oar,
Headlong he went down, calling in vain on friends.

The god himself took flight into thin air.

"A-drip" is "translationese" (what Pound called "Wardour Street" poeticising); and "flung" again looks both inevitable and slightly wrong. But the varied beat and accentuation of the basic pentameter pattern and, above all, the vocal and consonantal effects are beautifully judged. The sibilants in "slumberous", "Stygian", "swimming", "drowse" (an inspired noun) and, triumphantly, in Somnus—where the erudite exactitude turns lyric—breathe sleep. Note, also, the sequence of muted, closed sound in "fought", "drowse", "down"; "down", miming the somnambular fall and the suffocating tow of the sea. "Thin air" takes license with the text, but is a telling touch in regard to the phantasmal, inexplicable tenor of Virgil's account. Gavin Douglas adds (or hears in the Latin) one haunting trait:

Than all for nocht vpon his feris he cryis.
This god flaw up lyke a bird in the skyis.

Here the acoustic patterns do suggest an ironic analogy between the vain cries of Palinurus and those of a bird, bound skyward.

Priam's night visit to Achilles' tent in the *Iliad* (XXIV), Aeschylus's *Persians*, the *Hecuba* and *Trojan Women* of Euripides, had taught poetry how to put its accents on the voices of victims. It is the doom of Troy rather than the incipient foundation of all-conquering Rome which elicits the best in Virgil. Every motif which attaches to the fall of Priam's city develops under the pressure of graphic imagination and compassionate insight. No less than Palinurus, Laocoon has been one of the talismanic personae and points of aesthetic reference in Western literature and theories of representation. Sensing the treacherous purpose of the great wooden horse, Laocoon hurls a spear into its hollow flank. The effect is among the most famous pieces of "sound-poetry" in the epic:

sic fatus validis ingentem viribus hastam
in latus inque feri curvam compagibus alvum
contorsit. stetit illa tremens, uteroque recusso
insonuere cavae gemitumque dedere cavernae.

Every schoolboy has felt the mimetic, uncanny closeness of Virgil's "sound-track." Gavin Douglas's reproduction is broad but effective:

Festinyt the lance, that trymbling gan to schaik;
The braid belly schudderit, and with the straik
The bois cavis sowndit and maid a dyn.

Dryden weakens through embroidery: "*The sides, transpierc'd, return a rattling sound, / And groans of Greeks inclos'd come issuing thro' the wound.*" (Virgil is sometimes baroque, but not "clever" in this way. "*And the struck womb rang hollow, a moaning sound*" (Humphries) smacks of "translation", but does simulate the sonorities of the Latin. Day Lewis is, characteristically, "Victorian", but alert to the statuesque "slow motion" of Laocoon's act, and "concussion" is beautifully exact:

He spoke: he put forth his strength, and spun his huge great spear
At the flank of the monster, right into its belly's rounded frame.
The spear stuck quivering; the hollow womb of the creature
Grunted at the concussion and rumbled hollowly.

It is this resonant last line which a translator after Day Lewis must match or excel. Jackson Knight comes very near to doing so; his, however, is the largesse of prose: "*At the impact, the echoing spaces of the cavernous womb growled and rang.*" Fitzgerald contracts:

He broke off then
And rifled his big spear with all his might
Against the horse's flank, the curve of belly.
It stuck there trembling, and the rounded hull
Reverberated groaning at the blow.

At first glance, "rifled" looks inventively lean and "actual." But what, in fact, does the verb mean, what image is it meant to convey to us? "Hull", on the other hand, is both astute and evocative. The enemy "hulls" are lurking just over the horizon; the wooden horse, with its murderous and piratical crew, will "sail" into Troy. It is the closing verse which skimps, which economises on the cavernous *vibrato* and thunder-roll of the Latin. But Fitzgerald at once strengthens his grip:

If the gods' will had not been sinister,
If our own minds had not been crazed,
He would have made us foul that Argive den
With bloody steel, and Troy would stand today—
O citadel of Priam, towering still!

Only those who have themselves wrestled with this supreme passage, this overwhelming "*if* clause", will fully register the precision from within, the recaptured Latinity, both verbal and conceptual, of that "had not been sinister." The suggestion here is less one of Virgil writing in modern English, than one of an alternative concision in Latin itself. "Den" is as taut and true to the original as Jackson Knight's "lair", and speaks to our ears as Gavin Douglas's "Greekis coverit" did to the readers of his time. "*Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres*" has taken irradicable root in the Western sense of the

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condition of blinded man, of self-destructive history. To Marlowe, it brought "the topless towers of Ilium"; to Yeats "*The broken wall, the burning roof and tower.*" Dryden's "*And Ilian tow'rs and Priam's empire stood*" is appositely imperial. Day Lewis's "*O topless towers, you'd be standing now!*" risks the curious bathos of seeming a quotation. Fitzgerald bears implicit witness to the inheritance of recognition which presses on the passage and its many after-lives in the English language. But the subtle, slight shift in his placement of "towering" renews the immediacy of the text.

AENEAS RETURNS to his home in the burning city to find and rescue his wife; it is not Creusa whom he finds, but her prophesying shade. Creusa bids him a poignant yet imperious farewell. She will not be a bondswoman to the victorious Argives. She foretells Aeneas' wanderings and the regal marriage that will crown his glory. The angles of incidence here are as complex and refracted as in any Jamesian plot. Creusa's valediction is being narrated, is being cited, by Aeneas *to* Dido (II, 776–89) who, in the nascent anxiety of her love for Aeneas, failed to hear or misread the true import of the prophecy. It may be that Aeneas himself is failing to interpret rightly the promise *et regia coniunx parta tibi*. The listener, the reader, however, must apprehend in the stoic *dignitas* of Creusa's discourse, spoken, as it is, out of the clairvoyance of death, the inflection into an irremediable pathos of human, of secular desolation. We must hear in Creusa's commandment of farewell the insistent note of abandonment, of that eternally endangered womanhood which will, soon, unfold in Dido. The universality of the motif is underlined by the close parallels between this passage and Virgil's treatment of Eurydice in the *Georgics* (IV, 499ff). Fitzgerald strikes the note of pastoral sorrow:

> *Long exile waits, and long sea miles to plough.*
> *You shall make landfall on Hesperia*
> *Where Lydian Tiber flows, with gentle pace,*
> *Between rich farmlands, and the years will bear*
> *Glad peace, a kingdom, and a queen for you.*

But the crux comes in the final line:

> *iamque vale et nati serva communis amorem.*

The immediate sense is evident. Creusa bids Aeneas adieu and charges him with the safeguard of Ascanius, their son. He will love Dido and marry Lavinia. But the boy is *nati communis*; *conjoint* in the strongest connotation, "born of and unto us both." There is an infinitely delicate reproach in *nati . . . communis amorem*—an invocation, a reminder of, that past conjugal love which Aeneas' encounter with Dido and royal wedding in Latium will banish from remembrance twice over. But neither the auspicious will of the gods nor the founding of Rome can cancel the bond of parenthood. Only in Ascanius shall Creusa continue to live. Her part in him, her rights of anguish and of pride, endure. By guarding his son, Aeneas takes with him something of Creusa's presence.

No translation seems wholly to equate the moral edge and reticent grief of the Latin. Fitzgerald's "*cherish still / your son and mine*" overlooks the great force and decisive placing of

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amorem. Dryden's "*I trust our common issue to your care*" is, conceptually, not without penetration, but gray and leaden. "*And guard the love of the son whom we share*" (Jackson Knight) reads Virgil with responsive watchfulness; but here, too, the deeper note is muffled. C. Day Lewis seems to hear most: "*Cherish our love in the son it gave us*", and Douglas's concision is exemplary: "*Our a young sone, is commoun till we baith.*" It could be that the verse eludes fully convincing transposition just because it encloses what may be the most lapidary, exigent definition we have of great (poetic) translation: the imperative set on the translator to safeguard, to afford the truest deployment of coming life to a text in which the author keeps his posthumous, his provident rights.

In his remarks on the virtues and limitations of Dryden's method, Fitzgerald draws attention to Book XII (ll.862-70). Turnus, and again the stress of empathy lies with the victim, is losing his desperate single combat against divinely-aided Aeneas. The Virgilian handling of this final *agon* mirrors, both in general contours and specific touches, Achilles' slaying of Hector. The epic, the moral and the psychological determinants are, in deliberate part, contradictory. The martial triumph of Trojan Aeneas avenges Hector's appalling death. Hector's desperate race around the walls of Troy literally weaves a circle of imminent doom around the city. As Aeneas pursues Turnus, he is, as it were, circumscribing the future lineaments of all-mastering Rome. But the close analogies which Virgil enforces between the destinies of Hector and Turnus give to Aeneas' victory an ambiguous tenor. The advent of Rome does not obliterate the destruction of Troy (and the re-enactment of that destruction in that of Carthage, an act whose necessary but tragic quality is inherent in the humane, reticent politics of the *Aeneid* as a whole). To detach from Turnus' side his last succour, his divine and warlike sister Juturna, Jupiter dispatches one of his attendant furies—the Dirae born of Hell and Night. Plunging to the place of battle, this creature—we shall meet her again in Book II of *Paradise Lost—alitis in parvae subitam collecta figuram*. The dread demon takes on the shape of a small bird, but of a bird which merely "miniaturises" her true nature. Dryden elaborates, at the cost of genuine terror:

> *Contracted, to the boding bird she turns,*
> *Which haunts the ruin'd piles and hallow'd urns,*
> *And beats about the tombs with nightly wings,*
> *Where songs obscene on sepulchres she sings.*

"Beats" is, however, exactly apposite in view of the action to follow. Humphries's

> *Shrills its late song, ill-omened, on the roof-tops*
> *Or over tombs, insistent through the darkness*

preserves a suggestive tightness and Latinity. Humphries then specifies: "the little screech-owl." Both C. Day Lewis ("small owl") and Jackson Knight ("that small bird which . . . eerily sings her late song among the shadows") prefer indeterminacy.

The fury now attacks Turnus in a manner hauntingly suggestive both of common nightmares and of archaic, almost unrecapturable intimations of the affinities between certain birds and the souls of the dead, between the visitations of birds of twilight or night and the departure or damning of the human psyche—archetypal, "ritual" intimations to which Jackson Knight's Virgilian scholarship and translation are peculiarly responsive. Both the nightmare and the "archetype" are eloquent in Fitzgerald:

> *Went screeching, flitting, flitting to and fro*
> *And beating with her wings, against his shield.*
> *Unstrung by numbness, faint and strange, he felt*
> *His hackles rise, his voice choke in his throat.*

Virgil's *illi membra novus solvit formidine torpor, / arrectaeque horrore comae et vox faucibus haesit*, is incomparable in its acoustic, tactile conveyance of nightmare, of clammy yet horrendously pointed insinuations out of nausea and blackness. Only Goya comes in reach of the "infantile", loosening *Angst* of the passage. Dryden's "*A lazy chillness crept along his blood*" is oddly "wrong", perhaps because of the latent hint of personification. "*The thing was so uncanny that he went numb with fear*" (Day Lewis) explains more than it translates. In Jackson Knight, Turnus "going limp" is, quite uncharacteristically, jejune. "Unstrung by numbness" is uncannily echoing of Virgil, and the stifled aspirants in Fitzgerald's last line reproduce *horrore . . . haesit* as no previous version has succeeded in doing.

LET US LOOK AT one further passage, albeit a touchstone. The pictorial representations, the lyric and choreographic settings, inspired by the "royal hunt and storm"

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episode in Book IV of the *Aeneid* would, by themselves, constitute a major study. The interplay in this passage of wild motion and expressive formality, of landscape and human temperament, of mundane and supernatural agencies, comes near to crystallising the whole neo-classical aesthetic. And it is the particular *ingenium* of the art of Poussin or of Berlioz to have transmuted into their own performative means the poised contrasts in Virgil of turbulence and order. But there is also, in this celebrated cameo, a subversion of the articulate values, an insistent "ironisation" from within. Virgil instructs us of the histrionic excess in Dido's perception of the great occasion, of the tonal and gestural "overacting" in the wildly fugitive motion of the hunters before the storm. In subtle turn, this exaggeration undermines the mythological, the godly presences at Dido's and Aeneas' clandestine, yet absurdly "public" and declaratory nuptials. At the coda, Virgil emphasises the grimly immanent, almost pedestrian truth of the situation: *coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.* ("She calls it marriage; she uses the term to conceal her sin"—and one can imagine the fun which current deconstructionist readings would have with *praetexit.*)

Dryden, exemplary of the "neo-classical" joy in the incident, senses both the pictorial sublimity and the monitory humour or "deflation." The lighting is "forky", Juno literally "pours down" the chilling deluge, the hunters seek out "homely cots", the rains "raise" to the dignity of torrents "the creeping rills"—a phrasing which wonderfully evokes the mock-heroic quality of "elevation" in the text as a whole. Dryden does, however, make the famous moment of sexual union more portentously culpable, more "infernal" than it is in the original. He does so by deliberately echoing Milton's use of Virgil in Book IX of *Paradise Lost*:

> *Hell from below, and Juno from above,*
> *And howling nymphs, were conscious of their love.*
> *From this ill-omen'd hour in time arose*
> *Debate and death, and all succeeding woes.*

Summoque ululerunt vertice Nymphae test any rendition. Humphries's "*And mountain nymphs wail high their incantations*" strikes one as mimetic in too "anthropological" a vein. It sounds out of the world (itself, admittedly, at times Virgilian) of Frazer's *Golden Bough*. Day Lewis's "*somewhere above, the Nymphs cried out in pleasure*" is "licentious" in respect of Virgil in both senses of the word. "*On the mountain-peaks nymphs raised their cry*" (Jackson Knight) is unresponsive to the somewhat mad (but for this very reason subverted) music of the Latin. The same translator's "*The sky connived at the union*", on the other hand, is the most accurate reply we have to the mixture of lofty lyricism and self-deceiving complicity in the original.

Now Robert Fitzgerald:

> *Meanwhile in heaven began a rolling thunder,*
> *And soon the storm broke, pouring rain and hail.*
> *Then Tyrians and Trojans in alarm—*
> *With Venus' Dardan grandson—ran for cover*
> *Here and there in the wilderness, as freshets*
> *Coursed from the high hills.*
>
> *Now to the self-same cave*
> *Came Dido and the captain of the Trojans.*

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THE BODLEY HEAD

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Primal Earth herself and Nuptial Juno
Opened the ritual, torches of lightning blazed,
High heaven became witness to the marriage,
And nymphs cried out wild hymns from a mountain-top.

That day was the first cause of death, and first
Of sorrows.

The dishevelled pastoral is, one feels, North American—that "wilderness", those "freshets"—rather than Latian. But why not?

In the central moment, Fitzgerald opts resolutely for one of the determinant strands of implicit reference, that of the ornately matrimonial. Hence "Nuptial Juno", "ritual", the identification of lightning with wedding-torches, High Heaven as "witness", and the conclusive "marriage." This is, emphatically, Dido's vision. Jackson Knight's "connivance" and choice of "union", rather than "wedding" or "marriage", is far more communicative of the duplicities in Virgil. Though "wild", Fitzgerald's "hymns" further enforce the connubial note. They quite elide the irresponsible, self-corrective, lechery of the Virgilian touch. The Miltonic "quote" at the close is delicately muted; it points to Fitzgerald's persistent observance, both as poet and scholar, of the presentness of Virgil in English epic verse and sentiment.

Yet, read, heard, "imaged" in its integrity, this new version thins out, systematises, the tactile rush, the eddies of questioning calm within turbulence, the sexual pulse of its source. It matches neither the word-*play* of Dryden's "*And flashing fires enlighten all the cave*", nor the truly "primal" texture of Douglas's "*The flamb of fyreflaucht lychtnyt heir and thair.*" It remains, as we have seen, more tangential to a cardinal element in the Latin text than did Jackson Knight. It is as if the supple prosodic and "paragraphic" technique which Fitzgerald allows himself—the line-breaks, the variations in stress—had betrayed the contrastive dynamics and *élan* essential to Virgil (note how the rush and swelling of waters key-notes the manifold sense and connotations of the entire affair). Nor does Fitzgerald's elucidative economy allow the colour-suggestions so active in Virgil, and so seminal to Western painting: the thunder dark, the white hail, the green and green-silver of tumbling waters and sodden hills, the blackness of the cave, the flame-tints of lightning. Here the translator's true aids and masters ought to be the Virgilian themes in Claude Lorrain, in Poussin, in Turner.

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FREQUENT FELICITIES IN Fitzgerald's *Aeneid* merit demonstration: among them the rendition of Dido's amorous "insanity" in this same fourth Book, the Charon and Lethe passages in Book VI, Aeneas's vain endeavours to embrace his father's shade "Weightless as wind and fugitive as dream" in this central episode, the truly superb account of Allecto, Juno's servant Fury, in Book VII, Nisus' heroic terror and death. The motions of the heart and of the mind when they are in the grip of manic exultation or fear are finely met throughout this translation.

Concomitantly, there are disappointments and surprises which ought to be declared. The vulgar "*Her chest-wound whistled air*" cuts across the tumultous but governed anguish of Dido's suicide. As in his *Iliad*, so in this *Aeneid* Robert Fitzgerald wearies at the monotonies and technical detail of the extensive scenes of battle. When we see the Trojan reserves set out "*if a crisis called for it*", each man "*guarding in turn what each man had to guard*", the formulaic tiredness of the translator is palpable.

But an enterprise of this scope demands a more general response.

Rare, great acts of translation compel the source-text to yield up, to relinquish from its silent enclosing, elements, potentialities, fresh depths of intent, inherent, latent, but as yet unrealised. A great translation supersedes common logic in that it *adds* to the integral autonomy of the original *that which was already there.* Urquhart's Rabelais, Rilke's translations out of Michelangelo, Roy Campbell's versions of St John of the Cross, are of this order. They echo creatively, setting off new resonances in the primary text. Though this remains largely unperceived, there are moments in Pope's *Iliad,* notably in its rhetoric of self-blinding politics, which act precisely in this way in respect of Homer. Gerard Manley Hopkins's "Wreck of the Deutschland" had not found its predestined reader, the reader whom it was, literally, calling into being, until Pierre Leyris's metamorphic facsimile of the poem appeared in French.

Fitzgerald's Virgil is thoroughly responsible to many qualities in the *Aeneid.* It answers to the narrative energy, varied pace, concentrated economy of the Latin epic. It does not, I think, fundamentally enrich or question our sense of the

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initial status and afterlives of the poem. It does not compel us to think through Borges's acute paradox: "Will this original remain faithful to this translation?"

Great translation can also alter, by an imperative of alien constraint or, on the contrary, of compulsory enrichment, the fabric of its own language. It can do so with such loving violence, says Walter Benjamin with reference to Hölderlin's readings of Sophocles, that the doors of the translator's own language close behind him, that he cannot come home to the native limitations of his own speech. Such transgression, such "destabilisation" of the translator's tongue can be experienced in Goethe's translation of Manzoni's "Il Cinque maggio." Nearer home, the gates of English are wrenched open in Ezra Pound's Propertius and in the fragments we have of Christopher Logue's *Iliad*. Fitzgerald's *Aeneid* does not, it seems to me, enforce an alien, challenging radiance on Anglo-American speech and on the conventions of Anglo-American poetry at this stage in their evolution. His idiom is supple and clear. It exploits the twofold lineage of narrative ease and of nostalgic ceremony (cf. Allen Tate's "Pervigilium Veneris") in late 20th-century American poetry. It mirrors the shrewd elegance of the translator's own work as a poet. It is not a "speech act" that will unsettle or augment the means of skilled discourse.

It is, above all, and with every sober motive, an *Aeneid* for an audience not only cut off from the formal structures and language of Virgil, but from an ever-increasing portion of Virgil's presences in Western vernaculars, aesthetics and institutions. It does not, it cannot (Walter Benjamin again) aim at making itself transparent to, deliberately conducive towards, a reading of the Latin. It hopes to be an authoritative, responsively-formed and informing substitute for such a return to the source. As such it will, assuredly and for some time to come, belong to the necessities and achievements of the new literacy. It will bring to (one hopes) a wide public not only a "story" of inexhaustible interest and moral-political suggestion, but a partial sense of an *Aeneid* no longer in reach of our recognitions of immediacy (as it was, in considerable measure, in reach of John Dryden and the élite of his audience). To hope for more borders on extravagance.

The reader of the *Aeneid* whose Latin is ill-remembered or full of gaps, will fare best with the original in one hand and Jackson Knight's penetrative, often inspired prose version in the other. Where the Latin is out of natural range—Virgil is a far more difficult poet than is Homer—Robert Fitzgerald's translation now holds the field. Joined to his *Odyssey*, still his masterpiece, it constitutes, on the rare epic scale, a homecoming away from home.

Bridges & Goals

New Fiction—By JAMES LASDUN

FEW CONTEMPORARY WRITERS have divided critical opinion as sharply as William Burroughs has. Norman Mailer once defended him as perhaps the only living American writer of genius. John Willett's scornful review of *The Naked Lunch* in *The Times Literary Supplement* consisted of variations on the theme announced in its heading: "Ugh." The so-called "Ugh Correspondence" following that review, and appended to a recent edition of *The Naked Lunch*, makes very entertaining reading. Among the more curious endorsements of John Willett's opinion was this, from Edith Sitwell:

> "The public canonization of that insignificant, dirty little book *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was a signal to persons who wish to unload the filth in their minds on the British public.
>
> As the author of *Gold Coast Customs* I can scarcely be accused of shirking reality, but I do not wish to spend the rest of my life with my nose nailed to other people's lavatories."

A style of moral indignation that has passed safely into history—or has it? There was a move only last year to have *Junky* banned—for its pharmacological rather than its scatological content, it must be said—and in a more serious sense a resistance survives in purely literary terms, among people with impeccable liberal credentials. "Claptrap" was the word John Updike used for *Port of Saints* [1] when it first appeared in a limited edition in 1973. It isn't hard to understand this resistance. The writing is as violent an assault on literary propriety as the author's personal life has been on social propriety.

I think a key might be this statement from a character in *The Wild Boys*: "There is a word love that means nothing to me at all. It is just a feeling between the legs, a sort of tingle." The same view colours most of Burroughs's work. The belief in significant individual relationships, which has long been a precondition for almost all fiction, does not exist in any real sense in Burroughs's world. Without it, the continuity of experience it enforces, the range of motivations it provides, and the importance of apprehending individual character it implies, all disappear.

[1] *Port of Saints*. By WILLIAM BURROUGHS. John Calder, £8.95. Burroughs's most recent novel, *The Place of Dead Roads* (Calder, £9.95), arrived too late to be included in this review.

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A very different kind of fiction emerges, where metabolism and political status replace the personalities and networks of affection around which conventional fiction coheres. Pain and pleasure in the body; oppression and liberty in the body politic—these are the coordinates of Burroughs's work. The result, not surprisingly, tends to be tableaux rather than plotted narratives, archetypes rather than "characters", and a moral dimension that is completely pagan. I should say here that I find the tableaux, archetypes and morality all consistently, and brilliantly, inspiring. Burroughs's ability to fantasise about sex and politics is spectacular. "Pure verbal masturbation" John Willett called it, which was to miss not only the comedy and ingenuity, but also the innovative stylistic by-products forced into being in order to accommodate the compulsion to produce these fantasies. By this I mean not just the cut-up techniques, but the successful jettisoning of all the traditional novelist's paraphernalia; the refusal to toil laboriously at creating an authentic simulacrum of reality, or a consistent alternative version to it, in which to deposit his visions.

Burroughs's points of departure are the destinations of most other novelists. Saul Bellow, for example, spends a large part of *The Dean's December* carefully and skilfully moulding nuance upon nuance in order to suggest something morally unsavoury about a character called Dewey Spangler. In the end though, as if defeated by some fundamental inadequacy in his almost Jamesian approach to "placing" Spangler, he opts for Burroughs's metabolic approach, and has the man suddenly exhibit a colostomy bag—"Yes, there was the square plastic envelope. Something dark and warm was inside." It is horribly shocking in Bellow; a disturbing violation of his own rules, and an implicit admission that, magnificent as is the endeavour they represent, those rules are somehow obsolete.

In *Port of Saints*, as in all of Burroughs, this obsolescence is taken for granted—"This slimy old Count de Vile has his estate on an island of garbage in the middle of an oily lagoon" reads a typical introduction to a character; "in consequence the whole of Western society had collapsed" heralds a fantasy sequence of anarchic violence. An impoverished mode, perhaps; a regression to vaudeville or comic books. Burroughs might well agree. There is a sort of wistful hankering for plots and morals in his work. Chapters frequently open with a deftly sketched situation straight out of Graham Greene:

> "When Mr Wilson, the American Consul, arrived at his office he noticed a young man sitting by the reception desk, and he hoped that whatever the young man wanted could be handled by the Vice Consul, Mr Carter."

These openings seem to promise a real story, before lapsing into daydream, or nightmare. *Cities of the Red Night* is packed with similar echoes of plot machinery, to the extent that many critics were fooled into thinking there actually *was* a plot. It is a nostalgia, essentially, for an irretrievable form of writing—irretrievable because the preconceptions about life on which it is based can now only be entertained parodically, as in this, from a list of exotic clothing: "Graham Greene outfits for seedy agents who are bad Catholics on a mission they don't really believe in. . . ."

But Burroughs is not merely dancing on the grave of the novel. Indeed, immaculate as his prose always is, his real gifts as a writer have more affinity with those of the visionary poets than those of novelists. *Port of Saints* is among the most lyrical of his books. His stream-of-consciousness evocations of youthful sexuality have a sad, delicate beauty that is reminiscent of Rimbaud:

> "Dim dead boy so I haunted your old flower smell of young nights on musty curtains prep school clothes further and further away—come closer. Listen across backyards and ash pits. Sad old human papers I carry. I was waiting there. . . ."

And hovering behind almost every section in the book is the presence of the greatest of all poetic celebrations of the body, *The Metamorphoses*; specifically the third book, which tells of Bacchus and Narcissus.

The Wild Boys—the guerrilla bands at war with the various incarnations of US state oppression, in the book of that title—re-emerge in *Port of Saints*, still more ingenious in their bodily transformations, more bacchanalian in their revels. We left them in the earlier book on the threshold of an Ovidian dreamworld.

> "Two naked youths with black hair and pointed Pan ears casting dice by a marble fountain. The loser bends over looking at his reflection in the pool. . . ."

Now, in some of Burroughs's most entertaining fantasy sequences to date, they have mastered the art of metamorphosis, mutating themselves into an arsenal of living weapons with a fabulous range of magical powers; glider boys, "weather boys who ride a hurricane across the torn sky",

> ". . . plant boys who know the weeds and vines, marijuana behind the enemy lines, hay fever on the wind, water hyacinths snarl the boat propellor. . . . boys who can call the locusts and fleas. . . ."

Here, for comparison, is Ovid's Bacchus (via Arthur Golding), using *his* magic on the sailors trying to waylay him from Naxos:

> *But ivie troubled so their ores that forth they could not row*
> *And both with beries and with leaves their sailes did overgrow*
> *And he himself with clustred grapes about his temples round*
> *Did shake a javeling in his hand that round about was bound*
> *With leaves of Vines. . . .*

Respectable literary antecedents are no guarantee of genius; all I am suggesting by these comparisons (and there are many more that could profitably be made) is that Burroughs's romantic libertarianism is as closely allied to the very highest and most fertile forms of imaginative escapism as it is to the lowest. I hope this will persuade some of the unconverted to read *Port of Saints*. To the converted, I need only add that most of the old routines and obsessions are there: satirical comedy as black as ever, guns, hanging, drug-scoring, time-travel, disenfranchised scientists, rapid-fire orgies, the wonderful "Bor Bor" drug that lulls the enemy "into a state of fuzzy well-being and benevolence, a warm good feeling that everything will come out all right for Americans"; above all, the sense of life as a strange and awesome process of growth, too protean to be fixed in conventional patterns—what Nietzsche called the greatness of man, that he is "a bridge and not a goal."

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WHAT MORE COULD YOU ask for in a novel? Answer: the female sex. Women have long been banished from Burroughs's world. To become a Wild Boy, you have to forswear all relations with the opposite sex. Women mean babies, families, all manner of trouble. Hence, partly, the exclusively homoerotic nature of Burroughs's pastoral visions. A band of lesbian guerrillas called "The Darlings" makes a brief appearance in *Port of Saints*, only to be massacred by The Wild Boys. Aside from making him perhaps fatally incomplete as an artist, Burroughs's flagrant misogyny provides confirmation that the unspeakable men created by writers like Fay Weldon have a basis in reality.

Burroughs and Weldon are, in fact, curiously alike in their appraisal of the sexes. Each sees a more or less insuperable mutual hostility, each has a profound mistrust of Love and the Family, and each, at moments, advocates a form of separatism. Weldon, at heart a realist, does so with considerably less conviction than Burroughs, but in her new novel there is an employment agency which operates as a sort of underground feminist mafia—it might justifiably have been called *The Wild Girls*. . . .

Ruth, the heroine narrator of *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*,[2] is a true femophobe's nightmare; ungainly, unaccommodating, unattractive even to animals, supernaturally vindictive when spurned by her husband for a prettier mistress—the kind of woman Burroughs himself might have created.

The book is a revenge drama. Ruth's revenges on her callous husband Bobbo, and his treacherous (to her own sex) mistress Mary Fisher, are as elaborate as anything Tourneur or Webster could have dreamt up. Liberated into the exhilarating irresponsibilities of she-devilry by her husband calling her one as he abandons her, she burns down the home, dumps the children at the love-nest, engineers the return there of the mistress's invalid mother, tampers with her husband's business accounts so that he is imprisoned for misappropriation, suborns the judge to give him a stiff sentence. . . .

The classic criticism of revenge drama is that the imaginative energy expended by the author on the revenge so far outweighs that expended on the original misdeed as to dissolve any real connection between the two. Revenge becomes its own *raison d'être*, losing focus on its target until it encompasses the conditions of the protagonist's very existence. "She was taking up arms against God Himself", Ruth asserts at one point. More seriously, she concludes that even on a separatist feminist commune she visits briefly, a hierarchy of sexual attractiveness remains the natural order—"the best looking would suffer least, and the worst looking most, here as anywhere."

By the end, it clearly *is* the natural order, as she perceives it, that Ruth is up against. She has herself turned into a replica of the mistress, with the aid of excruciating plastic surgery, ready at last to reclaim her dazed husband from prison, and humiliate him sexually, as he once humiliated her: "Nature gets away with far too much. It needs controlling." Ruth's victory over nature is Pyrrhic, to say the least; and while it would be difficult to fault Weldon on her diagnosis of the injustices in the laws of

[2] *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*. By FAY WELDON. Hodder & Stoughton, £8.95.

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sexual attraction, it is depressing that a writer of her gifts cannot provide a better consolation than revenge.

CYNTHIA OZICK is a much more ambitious novelist than Fay Weldon. Her subject matter is a great deal more complex, and so is her prose. Disappointingly (her previous work has been highly praised), her complexity in both matters strikes me as largely artificial; a heavy gloss of intellectuality that tends to suffocate, rather than enliven, the ideas and perceptions on which it is superimposed. A pervasive bookishness makes *The Cannibal Galaxy*[3] seem at times like a secondary text to the author's reading—instruments are played not loudly, but with "Brobdingnagian electronic amplification." A determination to sound idiosyncratic at all costs produces a kind of fake baroque style that is ugly rather than arresting ("he was vomitous with regret"), circumlocutory rather than intricate, and all too often nothing more than vamped-up purple prose:

> "How he longed to follow her to Africa, to fold himself into knife blades of equator-heat for the sake of her wood-brown cheeks and berry-dark lips and polished mahogany thighs!"

Then too, being a decidedly philosophical novel, its emotional content finds expression in a language that doesn't always survive the transfer from the realm of ideas to that of passion: "'Mrs Lilt!' he yelled. 'The fact is I've got you deciphered! Decoded!'"

The Mrs Lilt in question is of course a philosopher, the distillation of whose wisdom seems to be: Don't Judge Too Soon. The man yelling at her is Joseph Brill, a Jewish/French visionary educator who conceived, while in hiding from the Nazis, the notion of a dual curriculum that would combine Jewish and European culture:

> "King David's heel caught in Victor Hugo's lyre, the metaphysicians Maimonides and Pascal, Bialik and Keats, Gemara hooked to the fires of algebra. . . ."

He becomes Principal Brill, head of his own school with its dual curriculum, in middle America, pursuing a form of icy excellence that for a time he believes Mrs Lilt embodies. His disillusionment with her is brought about by her disappointingly normal pride in her daughter Beulah, whom she believes is something of a prodigy, while Brill maintains she is barely average. In the end the girl turns out to be a great artist; Brill has judged too soon, and moreover acted on his judgment by removing from his life Mrs Lilt and the ideal of excellence she represents, resigning himself to a mediocre marriage.

Tragic irony of a kind; and I suppose the ability to generate it from subject matter of such a fiercely pedagogical nature is evidence of an original intelligence. The odd brief passage of genuine power corroborates this evidence, though such passages come too rarely to redeem the novel as a whole. The last sentence of the book describes Beulah's art: "She laboured without brooding in calculated and enamelled forms out of which a flaming nimbus sometimes spread." Substitute "very occasionally" for "sometimes", and the same summary could be applied to the art of Beulah's creator.

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BOTHO STRAUSS is one of Germany's most highly regarded writers. Needless to say, he is barely known in this country. The loss is ours: *Tumult*[4] is an enormously powerful book, with a contemporaneity about it that leaves the work of our own younger writers far behind.

It begins with the return of Becker to the Institute for News and Information—a Kafkaesque establishment which Becker loathes, but without which he is unable to exist—and plunges into a story revolving on Becker's terrifying sexual feelings for his daughter, and his gradual, alcohol-fuelled disintegration. Threaded on to this narrative is a series of brilliantly illuminatory glimpses into the spirit of modern Germany; vignettes, recollections, occasional fantasies, given by an increasingly tormented Becker as he stalks from bar to bar, or visits the hospital where his daughter is undergoing dangerous surgery for pains that have been gradually crippling her. The sensibility behind these glimpses is characterised by a complete immunity to the comforting illusions that make life tolerable for most people. Hyperaware of the violence, the "tumult" in his own nature, Becker is doomed to see, and flinch at, those same qualities in everything he beholds. Love reveals itself as mutual destruction under his gaze (I am reminded of Burroughs and Weldon). The mask of genial decency drops

[3] *The Cannibal Galaxy*. By CYNTHIA OZICK. Secker & Warburg, £7.95.

[4] *Tumult*. By BOTHO STRAUSS. Translated by MICHAEL HULSE. Carcanet Press, £7.95.

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from a surgeon at the hospital as he suddenly starts speaking to Becker in phrases that might have come straight from *Mein Kampf*. The behaviour of a group of businessmen in a bar is stripped down to its naked core of barbarity when a despised colleague joins them.

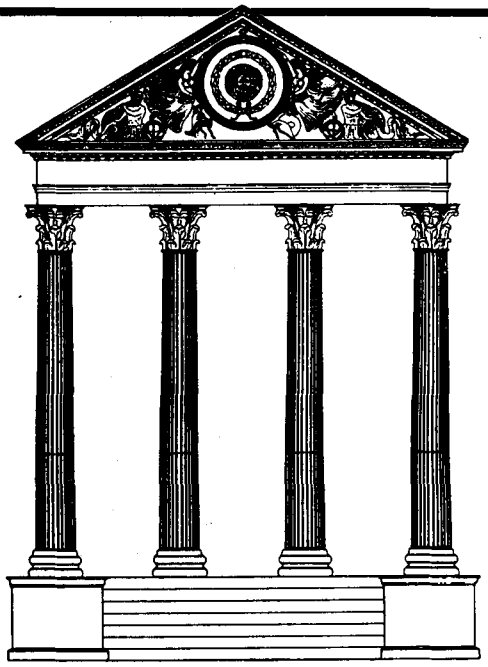
Nor is this sensibility in any way a refuge, the gleeful spleen of a congenital outsider. Becker's scepticism is comprehensive, respecting neither oppressor nor victim. At its most extreme, he even challenges the authenticity of indignation of a former concentration-camp inmate whom he encounters in America. The passage shows something of Strauss's remarkable ability to write at a pitch close to hysteria, while maintaining a high level of discriminatory intelligence:

> ". . . he was only interested in totting up a longer and more terrible list, and I, in order to prove my sympathy, could find nothing better to do than in the end simply bid as well and, in a veritable *danse macabre* poker, to play the atrocities I knew for what they were worth. At times it seemed to me that he was seeking out and savouring in this subject a dull, malicious thrill, the greatness of a righteous shudder, which the foul, hollowed-out life of recent years could offer nothing to compare with. At the end, at any rate, we were speaking thick and we circled babbling about the unspeakable camp, which, the drunker we became, raised its serpent head all the more mightily and I, groping for words, constantly in fear lest the slightest little word of German slip out inadvertently, was already ashamed of my coarse German accent and was all the time afraid that this mere undertone of German in everything I uttered would suddenly transport him into a rage again. . . ."

Tumult is full of such discomfiting passages. What makes them palatable is that they are given in an exploratory, rather than a dictatorial, spirit. Strauss impresses one as a writer motivated by a desire to *discover* his world, rather than communicate a preconception of it. As with Burroughs, this means there isn't much in the way of narrative. But the startling nature of Strauss's discoveries more than validates his approach; it confirms him as a writer of international stature. My congratulations to his skilful translator, Michael Hulse, as well as to Carcanet Press for making him accessible in this country.

THERE ARE SOME NOVELS in which you feel that an author's counter-critical manoeuvres have somehow taken precedence over his or her imaginative intent. The text bristles with pre-emptive weaponry aimed at annulling every reservation you may have, by persuading you that the flaws are all deliberate. William Golding's *The Paper Men*[5] strikes me as such a novel; its breathless account of a famous writer's attempt to thwart his American would-be biographer leaves me reluctantly submitting to the disappointment it has aroused generally. But every specific criticism I can offer has been in some way foreseen and answered. Slapdash style, suspiciously

[5] *The Paper Men*. By WILLIAM GOLDING. Faber & Faber, £7.95.



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sketchy bridge passages in the plot, crude characterisation, loose ends, alarmingly cheap caricatures of Americans and homosexuals—all these are attributable not to Golding but to Wilfred Barclay, his author/narrator, and are there to emphasise the wilful ruggedness of this decidedly un-Goldinglike persona.

Equally, the surprising (in Golding) lack of resonance during moments of apparent emotional or spiritual revelation, such as the ambigious epiphany Barclay experiences while looking at a figure of Christ in a cathedral, may after all be intentional too: one of the explicit themes of the novel is the belittling of experience in the world of these "Paper Men."

An apparent flaw, for which there is no obvious explanation, is that on two occasions (pages 79 and 113) Barclay refers to Rick Tucker, the would-be biographer, as Jake. Is this a piece of deliberate carelessness, a subtle pointer to Barclay's lack of real engagement with this representative of his demanding public? Or is it genuine carelessness on Golding's part? I wonder whether he, or Barclay, or perhaps the Faber copy editor, had at the back of his mind Jake Balokowsky, the American biographer stuck with the task of writing about Larkin in order to gain tenure, in Larkin's poem "Posterity." Could this poem perhaps have been the catalyst for *The Paper Men*? In its own way it engages in the same quarrel—with the burdensome machinery of literary fame. Could the two misnamings be evidence that Golding had not yet sufficiently assimilated his raw material to embark on transforming it into a novel?

A fanciful conjecture—but it is in the nature of a deliberately inferior piece of writing from a great author to tease fanciful explanations from its readers. One of the more convoluted was that of Anthony Burgess who, tongue-in-cheek perhaps, called the book an act of deliberate humility; a modest refusal on Golding's part to capitalise on his new status as Nobel Laureate—or words to that effect. You'd have to bend over a long way to believe that; I think I prefer my own theory.

Identifying the Identity

Welsh Traditions—By Jan Morris

As the poet said, it is with nations as it is with men: some cruel blow to their self-esteem leaves them worrying ever after about the state of their identity. Especially is this true of peoples which, though possessing grand ancient cultures of their own, find themselves in subjection to an overwhelmingly more powerful neighbour, and progressively mutated by its style, language, or ideology. Poland is one case in point; the Basques provide another; and close at home the English, who are specialists in these matters, can contemplate the perpetual self-questioning torments of their oldest subject people, the Welsh.

Torments, that is, for those of the Welsh who have not given up the struggle anyway, and allowed themselves to be metamorphosed into the image of their masters—and puzzlements perhaps even to those who have, for there are few Welsh people, however Anglicised, who do not share, if only in the subconscious, some of the *angst* of the national condition. It is an inescapable malaise. Loyalties are divided, convictions are hazed, patriots of one kind are pitted against patriots of another, and all the symptoms of private schizophrenia are publicly projected.

For those of us in Wales who feel a redemptive urge towards these miseries, whether we seek a solution through political or simply cultural means, the great problem, like that of an analyst confronted with some terribly splintered ego, lies in reassembling the personality. Wales was seldom a politically united country, even in the days of independence, but it had a universal sense of Welshness: it had its own language, its own magnificent literature, its own legal system, its own heroes and holy men. The ever more intrusive rise of English power destroyed that sense of organic certainty, leaving Welsh people arguing to this day about what Welshness is, about what *Wales* is indeed; the first task of the historical therapist is, so to speak, to identify the identity.

Some have come to feel that only the language counts: that without it nobody is truly Welsh, and that only its redistribution throughout all Wales can heal the trauma. Others suspect that the one inalienably Welsh aspect of Wales is the place itself—those marvellous landscapes which exert so powerful an influence on the Welsh mind, and have been a consolation to despairing patriots for centuries. Others again rely on the unifying thread of Welsh history—you can't take *that* away from us! Mr Emyr Humphreys now offers a fresh prognosis. In *The Taliesin Tradition*[1] he suggests that the identity of Wales can best be discerned in its poetic tradition—a tradition accessible to all, even at a pinch without the Welsh language, through the ever-creative medium of myth. Taliesin himself, the 6th-century father of Welsh poetry, was half-myth, a figure of mystery and speculation, a shape-changer who has always haunted the Welsh imagination: and myth, Mr Humphreys maintains, has sustained the fact of Welshness down all the centuries, regenerating itself ever and again in new kinds and manifestations.

It is a visionary idea of nationality, brilliantly expounded in this altogether remarkable book. I am not sure that I have always followed its train of thought correctly, but I was enthralled by its flair and learning. Mr Humphreys is as much a

[1] *The Taliesin Tradition*. By Emyr Humphreys. Black Raven Press (Flat 2, 17 Sheffield Terrace, London W8 7NQ), £10.95.

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novelist as an historian, both in Welsh and in English, and he interprets the idea of myth in a story-teller's way, as the expression of the profoundest collective instincts, and summons a entrancing cast of characters to help him.

There are poets, of course, reaching in an unbroken line from Taliesin himself down to modern exponents of the classical Welsh metres (as Saunders Lewis once said, you cannot pluck a flower of song in modern Wales "without stirring a great northern star of the 6th century "). There are transcendental heroes like Arthur, Glyndŵr, or the ambiguous Lloyd George. There are men of God as varied as Catholic exiles in Italy, Pennsylvania Quakers, or the daring Unitarian ministers of *Smotyn Du*, the Black Spot of anti-Trinitarianism in 19th-century Dyfed. There are stunning individualists like John Dee the Elizabethan mathematician, who envisaged the British Empire itself as an extension of Welsh legend, or Iolo Morgannwg, forger, litterateur and stonemason, who created a whole new cult and climate of Welshness in the 19th century.

All these people, and countless others, Mr Humphreys weaves into his tapestry, and he also sees the mythic tradition expressed, as I understand him, in many of the great Welsh historical movements: in the accession to the English throne, for example, of the half-Welsh Tudors, which convinced many Welshmen that their nation was now fulfilled, in the heady Methodist Revival which made a Chosen Race of them, in the establishment of the Welsh colony in Patagonia, their Promised Land, and in the Marxism and internationalism of the coalfield in the 1930s, which gave so many of them an idealistic sense of brotherhood. All this, he implies, is in some sense contributory to the Taliesinic idea, poetical, shifting, imaginative, and so constitutes, if I may be forgiven a pre-Freudian concept for a change, a distinct and consistent national soul.

The Taliesin Tradition is a work both of scholarship and of art. It could hardly be done with more dignity and integrity, and is so rich in ideas that a review cannot do it justice—half its power lies in its texture. But does it, I wondered as I closed its pages, get us any further with our therapy? Does that identity really stand more sure of itself at the end? I rather fear not. Even Mr Humphreys gropes rather, as he reaches out for conclusions—"it is always the past rather than the present", he gnomically observes, "which offers the best hope for the future." Try quoting *The Taliesin Tradition*, I could not help thinking, when you go canvasssing in Splott or Tonypandy! Taliesin who?

The last page of the book compares the situation of a modern Welsh-language poet with that of an Eastern European dissident, drowning his sorrows in a *dacha*, or an American campus writer doing the same thing with bourbon. At least today's descendants of Taliesin, it suggests, are better off than that, for they are "anchored in historical reality by their language, their landscape, their history."

Language, landscape, history—where we began, really, back to the formulae of earlier analysts: but if in psychiatric terms we not much better off at the end of Mr Humphreys' book, intellectually, artistically and even spiritually this work will leave every Welsh reader grateful and admiring; and it may even persuade Englishmen to think in a new way about the proud mysteries of the place next door.

Paris: Winter Night, 1887

Small wonder the poets of modern life
feel oppressed by the city. A cab-horse
droops its head against wind keen as a knife.

Scurrying figures vanish into coarse
hallways, as if to escape conversion.
It's all dead matter wheeling round the Bourse.

Absinthe Paris represents aversion—
to the horror of being stuck midway
down a shaft resounding with assertions.

Sleet pelts the mussel-black roofs and doorways,
round café lamps where gourmands eat pink roe;
the bridge where beggars stare at rumbling drays.

Two hobnail boots splash in the filthy snow,
dreaming of when they were painted, a day
of Naples blue, the language of swallows.

Fergus Chadwick

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ART

A "Rediscovery" of Europe?

Letter from New York—By HILTON KRAMER

THERE HAS NEVER been a time in American history when Europe did not play an important role in the life of art in the United States. It is mainly European art, after all, that fills the great American museum collections, both those devoted to the Old Masters and those devoted to the modernists. It was to the academies of London, Rome, Paris, Munich, and Düsseldorf that aspiring American artists long felt obliged to travel for their training, and it was in the art capitals of Europe, too, that generations of American aesthetes and amateurs of the arts gathered their impressions and developed their taste. For artists and amateurs alike, it is in their experience of European art that Americans have tended to acquire their sense of aesthetic *quality*.

Even in the formation of the New York School in the 1940s and 1950s, which decisively altered the relation in which American art would thenceforth stand to its European counterpart, a key role was played by certain European masters of the modern movement. The art of neither Jackson Pollock nor Willem de Kooning nor Robert Motherwell, for example, is conceivable without the prior achievements of Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, Mondrian, Miró, Klee, et al., nor—to pass beyond the first generation of the New York School—would the art of Robert Rauschenberg have been imaginable without Kurt Schwitters, say, or that of Jasper Johns without Marcel Duchamp. One could extend this list of vital connections almost indefinitely. Alexander Calder owed much to Mondrian, Miró, and Arp in his realisation of the first "mobiles"; and David Smith—still, in my view, the greatest of American sculptors—never tired of acknowledging his profound debt to the work of Picasso and González. In this respect, it is the exception rather than the rule which is noteworthy. Of the artists who made up the first generation of the New York School, only Clyfford Still seems to have owed little or nothing to European precedent. This is one of the reasons why his European admirers tend to find in his art a more authentic statement of American experience than they generally glean in the work of his contemporaries. Yet this very "freedom" from European precedent—if that is what it is—has proved to be a grave problem for Still's many American followers. Sooner or later they find that Still's wholesale repudiation of Europe, if strictly adhered to, leads to a dead end; and they are then obliged to renew their attachment to European tradition in order to remain productive artists.

There can be no question, then, about the role of Europe in the life of American art. It has been central in the past, and it remains central today. Yet something about that role *has* changed, and the change has been profound. It is reflected in the alacrity with which a great many of the most gifted and ambitious European artists now head straight for New York at the first opportunity. They want to see for themselves what American artists are doing and thinking. They want to show their own work in the context of the New York art scene, which is now acknowledged to be the place where (for better or worse) standards of quality are likely to be determined and where, as a consequence, reputations are made or confirmed. This change is also reflected in the eagerness of European museums to exhibit the latest achievements of American art, and to acquire major examples of it for their permanent collections. There is, in fact, a fierce competition among certain European museums to be *first* in organising retrospective exhibitions of the work of the younger American artists with international reputations. As a result, these American artists are given museum retrospectives at an earlier and earlier age every year—it is no longer uncommon for an American artist to be given a "major" museum exhibition before the age of thirty—and more and more European curators have come to pride themselves on having a special relationship with the American art scene—on being, in effect, the guardians and arbiters of American reputations.

What all of this means, of course, is that New York's role as the art capital of the Western world is now an established datum in Europe, and recognised as such by the Continent's leading artists, curators, critics, and collectors.

HILTON KRAMER *was for many years the distinguished (and very influential) art critic of "The New York Times." He is now the editor of a New York cultural review, "The New Criterion."*

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NEW YORK ACHIEVED this option as the direct consequence of two major events: *1.* Hitler's conquest of Western Europe, which caused a great many European artists, art historians, dealers, and collectors to seek refuge in the United States and establish new careers there; and *2.* the emergence of the New York School—as the Abstract Expressionist movement came to be called—as the principal successor to the avant-garde which had flourished in Europe prior to Hitler's rise to power.

To the first of these events the United States responded with a familiar attitude of generosity. (America was founded, after all, as a haven for Europe's oppressed classes.) When Hitler's campaign against "Degenerate Art" and its supporters reduced the independent artists and intelligentsia of Western Europe to the status of such an oppressed class, it was inevitable that many of them would turn to the United States for survival; and they very quickly found a fertile field there for their creative energies. In the emergence of New York as the art capital of the West in the 1940s, this influx of *émigré* artists, dealers, and art historians certainly played a sizable role.

Even more important, however, was the development of the New York School itself, and about this artistic event the attitude of the United States was, at the outset at least, far more equivocal and uncertain. Americans had traditionally looked to Europe—especially to France—for leadership in the visual arts. The very idea of an avant-garde in art was, for Americans interested in this (then) esoteric phenomenon, virtually inseparable from the life of art in Paris. For this reason, American collectors still looked to Paris for their major acquisitions even after the War, and American museums and the American press likewise preferred the School of Paris to anything produced in New York. Recognition came very slowly to the New York School; it was not until the mid-1950s that it showed any signs of a real momentum, and not until the late 1950s and early '60s that it became a more or less official attitude. (It was only then that museums and private collectors began to compete for major acquisitions.) By then there was a second generation of New York School artists to reap the benefits and win immediate rewards, as well as a new generation of critics, curators, and collectors to grant them. By the early 1960s there was also—for the first time—a large and enthusiastic public for this new American art. The New York art world as we know it today was thus born in the 1940s, but it achieved its most significant growth twenty years later.

ONE FACTOR in this process of recognition and growth was, it must be said, the decline of art in Europe. Throughout the period we are speaking of, there was always a number of European artists—Dubuffet and Giacometti in France, Henry Moore and Francis Bacon in England, and the Cobra group in Northern Europe, among others—who enjoyed high favour in America. Even in the heyday of the New York School, the Museum of Modern Art in New York gave an exhibition to Balthus before it gave one to de Kooning. The Metropolitan Museum of Art gave an exhibition to Bacon—and this year is giving one to Balthus—on a scale it has never devoted to the work of Pollock or Motherwell or Rothko.

There was thus nothing of a nationalistic character in the view—which more and more came to be the common view in New York—that in the creation of new art Europe had suffered something of a decline in the period immediately following upon the end of the Second World War. On the contrary, New York was more internationalist in its outlook on contemporary art in this period than it had ever been in the past. The growing pride that Americans learned to take in the new American art was due, in large part, precisely to its internationalist outlook. Far from closing the door on Europe, New York remained alert—one might even say, excessively alert—to new developments in Europe even in the halcyon days of the New York School. As a result of this American eagerness to discover new talent in post-War Europe, more than a few minor artists on the Continent were mistaken for major ones. This naturally caused disappointment and dismay, yet American interest in European art never flagged. Far from adopting an isolationist attitude in art, New York remained ready to welcome new achievements wherever and whenever they could be discovered.

IT IS AGAINST this background that the so-called "rediscovery" of European art in more recent years needs to be understood. Beginning somewhat slowly in the mid-1970s and then rapidly accelerating in the early '80s, the work of certain European artists—most particularly, of course, the work of the Neo-Expressionist school in West Germany and Italy—met with tremendous favour in New York and on the American art scene generally. For the most part, American critics welcomed this new development with enthusiasm, and American collectors began acquiring the work in large quantities. American museums, too, were quick to organise exhibitions of the new European art, and to compete with each other and with their European counterparts in acquiring outstanding examples of the art for their permanent collections. So important has this European "invasion" of the American art scene now become that it can truly be said to account for some of the major exhibition events on the American art calendar, season after season.

As I write, for example, two sizeable exhibitions are currently commanding great attention. The first, organised by the St Louis Art Museum in the summer of 1983 and now touring museums in six other American cities, is called *Expressions: New Art in Germany*. It is devoted to the work of Georg Baselitz, Jörg Immendorff, Anselm Kiefer, Markus Lüpertz, and A. R. Penck. The second is the opening exhibition of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Called *The First Show: Painting and Sculpture from Eight Collections, 1940-1980,* this exhibition draws upon private collections in Europe and America, and shows both European artists (Fautrier, Klein, Tinguely, Clemente, Chia, et al., as well as the German painters mentioned above) and American artists (Stella, Rothko, Johns, de Kooning, Pollock, et al.) on an equal footing.

If this situation can accurately be described as a "rediscovery" of Europe, it is only because European artists

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are once again producing new art of a quality and scope which meets the internationalist standards that New York has set for itself as well as for others. For the older generation in New York, this "rediscovery" of Europe is no rediscovery at all, of course: European art has never been absent from its aesthetic consciousness. A feeling of kinship with modern European culture has remained crucial to its vision of the artistic vocation.

It is for the younger generation in America—brought up, as it was, to regard the achievements of American art as central to the very idea of new art—that these recent developments may constitute an experience of "rediscovery." If this is the case—as I believe it to be—then it speaks very well for the younger generation of American artists, for they too have greeted the new art of Europe with a keen sense of kinship, curiosity, and competition. What has changed, however, is that the competition is now regarded as a competition of equals.

Island

Some people have their names on roses or ice-cream;
Mine is on an island.
My father found it. Pausing in the midst of
Selling sea-slugs, trading trinkets, growing copra,
Fishing for pearls and smuggling
Bird-of-paradise feathers—
All of which activities
As a child to me seemed normal,
The sort of thing one's father did,
Or had done in his youth—
He sailed
And went about, and found it.
A few rocks,
Uninhabited, lacking vegetation,
But all the same
Not quite covered at high tide.
Since they were not marked on Admiralty maps
They did not officially exist.
In order that they should be recognised
As island
And not endanger navigation, he charted them
And claimed then for the British Empire
In the name of George the Fifth,
Setting his own name upon them,
His name and mine—
Osborne Rocks.

I often wonder
Did he plant a flag before he left,
Or carve a stone or build a cairn?

My father died
Leaving little to posterity
But one or two log-books
And the chart of a far-eastern
Unprofitable island
Which I now possess in dreams,
Feel the tug of waves receding,
The shuffling wrack where water streams
And leaves the grey rocks bare.
My father left a not despicable inheritance,
An island of the mind.

June Osborne

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DOCUMENT

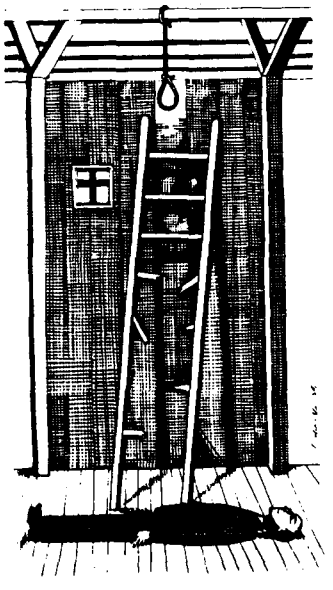
Adam Michnik's Open Letter

From: *Adam Michnik, son of Ozjasz,*
Rakowiecka Street 37, Warsaw,
Under investigative detention.
10 December 1983

To: *The Minister of the Interior,*
General Czeslaw Kiszczak,
Warsaw.

"I am in receipt of your writing, Mr Rzewuski, on which I have long pondered as to what its meaning might be and whether I should respond to it. A decent man, however, has no need to hide his thoughts, contempt for vileness is a rule for him, and this is, Sir, how I intend to deal with you. . . . As citizen I am unable to follow your advice which, while pretending to be inspired by the love of liberty, relies on foreign compulsion. Those who for the sake of their own pride and interests dared to trade the blood of their countrymen, are a disgrace to the nation and traitors to the Motherland. This is how I feel towards you, Sir. . . ."

FROM A LETTER OF PRINCE JOZEF PONIATOWSKI TO HETMAN SEWERYN RZEWUSKI, MAN OF TARGOWICA[1]



AT THE BEGINNING of November, filled with disgust at the behaviour of employees of your department, I lodged a complaint with you. I pointed out the meanness of such deeds as depriving me of books (which I had in my cell with the consent of the prosecutor), denying me the additional daily walk recommended by doctors, and various threats occasioned by some foreign radio transmissions. For prisoners in the Third Investigative Pavilion it is no secret that the repressive actions here are carried out by order of the Security Service. The names of the men responsible are no secret either, as for instance that of their local boss, Mr Tamborski of the Ministry of the Interior.

In my letter I invoked civilised standards binding on all men of honour, which forbid ill-treatment of a defenceless imprisoned political adversary. Some days later I asked one of my visitors to ask you whether you had received my letter. To my astonishment you told him that it was not in your power to restrain your subordinates. You declared yourself incompetent to order the return of my books. On the other hand, you were competent enough to present me with a rather curious choice —either I shall be given the chance to spend Christmas on the Côte d'Azur as a free man, or I would have to face trial and many years in prison. You assured me that after the trial, once "the authorities have swallowed this frog", my leaving the country would be out of the question. In this way I learned that the Polish Minister of the Interior finds it more difficult to restrain the malice of over-zealous security agents than to forecast the sentence which the military court will pass on me, and even offers me a generous holiday in the south of France. . . .

When I read, in early November, in *Trybuna Ludu*, the statement by Mr Jerzy Urban that I could regain my freedom at the cost of leaving Poland, I took it at first as just another witticism of this gifted columnist, so grievously wronged by his appointment to the post of government spokesman of the Polish People's Republic. He can hardly do much damage to the government of General Jaruzelski, whose reputation in Poland and abroad has reached rock-bottom anyway. But he is doing a lot of damage to his own reputation by presenting light jokes as serious propositions. Just a month earlier, at the beginning of October, Mr Urban reassured public opinion that "political prisoners are being held separately, not together with common criminals." Imagine—I took him seriously and, in my naivety, demanded to be given a cell with some other political prisoner because I am, in fact, being held in a cell with common criminals. However, the Head of Detention, Major Nowacki, and later the Head of the Warsaw Military Court were good enough to enlighten me: this is all nonsense, and Mr Urban did not know what he was talking about. He did not know the regulations in force. After that, I have treated the utterances of General Jaruzelski's spokesman exclusively as a comical turn, and occasionally I quite enjoy them. For instance, I can really commend what the spokesman has to say about Mr Lech Walesa. And that is how I still interpret his remarks about the possibility of purchasing my freedom by going abroad. However, your offer, General, of a Christmas on the Côte D'Azur made me ponder very deeply as to what the meaning of this curious proposition might be.

[1] Prince Józef Poniatowski, the last King of Poland, later Commander of Polish Forces under Napoleon, was at the time opposing the group of Polish magnates who, at Targowica, decided to invoke the help of Catherine the Great to restore the "golden liberties" of high nobility, abolished by the Constitution of May 1791. Since then, the word "Targowica" in Polish is synonymous with "treason."

ADAM MICHNIK *has been imprisoned since 1981, most recently in Mokotow Prison in Warsaw, where the 36-year-old historian, together with three other members of the self-dissolved Workers' Defence Committee* (KOR), *awaits trial on the charge of "planning to overthrow the sociopolitical system by force." In the December 1983 issue of* ENCOUNTER *we published his article "From a Polish Prison", together with an interview—although for obvious reasons we could not reveal how that was obtained. His "Open Letter" to General Kiszczak was, astonishingly, sent out through the official prison post (and received by the Information Centre for Polish Affairs in London, which publishes the news bulletin "Uncensored Poland").*

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WHAT I HAVE TO SAY in this letter is only my personal opinion, but I have reason to believe that thousands of people in Poland think along similar lines. I have come to the conclusion that your proposal that I should leave Poland means that:

1. You admit that I have not done anything that would enable a law-abiding prosecutor to accuse me of "preparing the overthrow of the system by force" or "weakening the defensive capacity of the State", or to enable a law-abiding court to pass the verdict of guilty.

I am of the same opinion.

2. You admit that sentence has already been passed on me, long before the trial has even begun.

I am of the same opinion.

3. You admit that the indictment, the work of a prosecutor at the disposition of the government, and a sentence passed by a court at the disposition of the government would be sufficiently nonsensical to lack all credibility; that this would bring honour to the convicted and shame to the convictors.

I am of the same opinion.

4. You admit that the purpose of the punitive procedure is not to see that justice is done, but to get rid of embarrassing political opponents.

I am of the same opinion.

From here onwards, however, we begin to differ. I think that to admit to such open disregard of the law one has to be an idiot; that to offer a man, held in prison for two years, the Côte d'Azur in exchange for his moral suicide, one has to be a swine; and that to believe that I could accept such a proposal is to consider every individual to be a police henchman.

I KNOW VERY WELL, General, why you need our departure. You need it to be able to besmirch us in your newspapers with redoubled energy, as people who have at last shown what sort of people they are, as men who first carried out the orders of their foreign masters and then went on to enjoy capitalist luxuries. You need it to persuade the world that you are noble liberals, and that we are spineless wretches. You need it to tell the Poles: "Look, even they have capitulated, even they have lost faith in a free and democratic Poland!" You need it, above everything else, to improve your opinion of yourselves, to be able to say with relief: "After all, they are no better than I am. . . ." For you are worried by the fact that there are people for whom the thought of Poland brings to mind not a ministerial chair, but a prison cell, who prefer Christmas in investigative detention to a holiday in France.

You do not really believe that such people exist. And that is why you, General, in your last speech in the *Sejm*, in the dirtiness of your accusations, have sunk to the level of the classic example of this kind of people—that of Stanislaw Radkiewicz.[2] That is why you say, even among yourselves, that we are either real tricksters (for we take money from American Intelligence) or idiotic "fanatics" (for we prefer staying in prison to rambling along Paris boulevards). After all, not one of you would hesitate, given such a choice!

You cannot think of us in any other way, for that would make you face—if only for a brief moment—the truth about yourselves. The truth that you are vindictive, dishonourable swine. The truth that if there was ever a spark of decency in your hearts, you have long buried it in that brutal and dirty struggle for power which you wage among yourselves. And, being knaves, you want to drag us down to your own level.

Well, I am going to deny you that pleasure. I cannot foresee the future, and I am not at all sure that I shall live to see the victory of truth over lies, and of *Solidarity* over the present anti-worker dictatorship. However, *mon Général*, for me the value of our struggle does not lie in the expectation of victory, but in the value of the cause for which we have undertaken this struggle. Let my gesture of refusal be a tiny contribution to the sense of honour and dignity of this country, which every day is being plunged into ever deeper misery. And for you, traders in others' freedom, let it be a slap in the face.

I DO NOT CONSIDER PRISON to be a particularly poignant punishment for me. It was not I who was proscribed that December night two years ago—it was liberty. It is not I who is in prison today—it is Poland.

For me, General, it would be real punishment if, at your orders, I had to be a sleuth, wave a truncheon, shoot at workers, question detainees, or pass disgraceful sentences. I am happy to find myself with the victims, not on the side of the victimisers. Of course you cannot comprehend this; otherwise you would not make such foolish and wicked proposals.

There comes in the life of every man a difficult time when the simple statement "This is black and that is white" involves paying a heavy price. It may even mean death on the slopes of the Citadel,[3] behind the barbed wire of Sachsenhausen, or in the cells of Mokotow Prison. At that moment, General, an honest man dare not ask what the price will be; his problem is to know exactly what is white and what is black. This requires a conscience. Adapting a saying of a great writer of our continent, I should say that the first thing you need to know, General, is what it is to have a human conscience. It may be news to you that there are two things in this world of which one is called "Evil" and the other "Good." It may be a revelation to you that it is not good to lie, that it is wrong to betray, and that to imprison and to murder is even worse. It makes no difference that such things may be expedient. They are forbidden. Yes, General—*forbidden*. Who forbids? Well. General, you may be a powerful Minister of the Interior, you may have behind you the might of a power that extends from the Elbe to Vladivostok, and under you the entire police force of the country, hosts of agents, millions of zloties for guns, water-cannon and bugging devices, servile henchmen, informers and newspapermen. But suddenly you face in the darkness something invisible and unknown—which tells you: "*This you must not do. . . .*" That is conscience.

[2] Stanislaw Radkiewicz, the dreaded Minister of Public Security throughout the Stalinist period until December 1954, when the Ministry was abolished (at least in name).

[3] The Warsaw Citadel was a place of execution of Polish patriots, especially after the Rising of 1863.

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YOU MAY THINK this letter just another proof of my obtuseness. You are accustomed to hearing humble requests, official police reports with private denunciations. And yet a man who is entirely in your hands, a man harassed by your underlings, accused by your prosecutors, waiting to be condemned by your judges, dares to preach to you about conscience. What cheek!

However, you can no longer astonish me. I know there will be a high price to pay for this letter, that your subordinates will try to make me aware of the full possibilities of the prison system of this country on its road to Communism. But I have my truth, and I feel bound by it.

Therefore I have no further requests of you—except one. I ask you to think again. Not about my fate—I hope somehow to endure any new devices your colonels and majors may invent. Think again about yourself. Sitting down at the Christmas table—just admit, for a moment, the thought that you are responsible for your deeds. You will have to answer for breaking the law. The suffering and the humiliated will present you with a reckoning. It will be an ominous moment.

I hope that when that moment comes you will be able to keep your personal dignity; and I wish you courage. Do not try to exonerate yourself by saying that you didn't know. That would earn you not pity but contempt.

As for myself, I hope that at the right moment—as once before, in Otwock, I managed to save the lives of several of your subordinates[4]—I will be able to appear just in time and help you in your danger, that I will be able to place myself once again on the side of the victims and not on that of the victimisers. Even if, afterwards, you should wonder at my incorrigible stupidity and decide to lock me up once more.

[4] In the heyday of *Solidarity* in 1981, an enraged crowd in Otwock, near Warsaw, threatened to burn down the police station and lynch several policemen. It was Adam Michnik who managed to calm down the crowd, apparently by saying humorously, "I too am an 'anti-socialist element'."

Lieutenant What's-Your-Name

". . . and that's your boss behind you", while a hand
Dropped on my shoulder, turning me to face
The newcomer. "Edwards, have you two met?"
"Not yet", I said, "but. . . . " Suddenly the room,
The conference-table with the padded chairs,
The walls stuck round with maps and charts and plans,
The sherry-drinkers waiting to begin,
Faded, became a tent in Burmese scrub,
While Edwards' clothes slid into khaki-green,
Grew epaulettes and sewed on captain's pips.
The beer, brought up that morning from Rangoon,
Stood on a table by the gramophone;
Already, through the darkness, singing came
In maudlin chorus from the Sergeants' Mess.
"Let's start! Come on, Lieutenant What's-Your-Name",
Said Captain Edwards, "put a record on!"
I took the top one, scarcely noticing
That it was Brahms—the only classic there
Among a pile of sentimental trash—
Wound the machine and put the needle down,
While other junior officers bustled round
With cans of beer—to Captain Edwards first,
Silkily lapping up the obsequiousness,
His fingers poised to tap accompaniment
To the well-worn dance tune just about to start.
And then the lighting struck! "You bloody fool!
Take off that blasted rubbish!—and then take
Yourself off, too, Lieutenant-What's-Your-Name!
And do your best to keep away from me!"
I did, until he left the regiment—
Until this morning, twenty-three years on,
The roles reversed. I saw the puzzlement
Groping behind his eyes, the baffled pain
Of blurred recall. He never came again.

John Elwell

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EAST & WEST

Cairo Memories

By Magdi Wahba

I HAVE REACHED the age when I can look back half-a-century with some chance that vividness of memory will not fade too quickly. I think back to a childhood in the late 1920s and early '30s, to an adolescence on the eve of World War II, and to a youth and maturity spent during the War years and followed by an awareness of lesser wars, some on my own doorstep, others further afield. The one conscious thread through the turbulence of our times has been the sense of recurring social upheaval and of the alienation which has beset most of my generation.

Most of my life has been spent in Cairo, where the chance of birth made me aware very early of the infinite complexity of a city crowded with people of vastly differing backgrounds, rapidly changing class structures, and heterogeneous cultural values. The experience of living in Cairo was—and probably still is, though to a lesser degree—one of constantly coming to terms with change, constantly reinventing ideas which had been invented quite frequently before, and of starting afresh with political and social passions which echo those of past and forgotten generations. For a sense of the historic past carried forward is not relevant in situations where the present is always invented as if from scratch, with the enthusiasm of spontaneous discovery. Cairo, the physical place, the changing metropolis, with its protean forms of vanishing communities and social strata, is ever melting, ever taking on new shapes.

The Cairo of my childhood in the early 1930s was one of three converging cities. The first was middle-class and residential, with nervously centrifugal tendencies, moving out of the traditional residential quarters of Abbassia, Ezbekia, Helmia and Moneera, to the relatively new ones of Heliopolis, Zamalek, Garden City and Giza. The old Italianate-Ottoman-style houses laden with stucco were soon turned into insalubrious flats, schools and office buildings. The new houses, built mainly by French, Italian, and local Jewish architects (for whom the '20s were bonanza years) tended to imitate the "Modern Style" of Paris and Marseilles. These new houses were defiantly grand, but hardly ever had much of a garden attached to them. Almost abutting on the tree-lined pavements, they lacked the privacy which characterised a Parisian *hôtel particulier* or an opulent London town-house. Besides, however costly and grand they might have been, they were relatively small and in no way comparable to any of the stately houses of Europe in size or number of rooms. With this new pretentious architecture came a plague of cabinet-makers and agents for reproduction antique furniture from Paris, London, and Milan, all vying with each other to fill spacious halls with imitation Hepplewhite, Sheraton and Scottish Baronial from the workshops of Majorel, Jansen, Maple's and Heal's. Yet, strangely, the emphasis was on furniture and statuary (especially in bronze). The walls often remained bare, except for the occasional imitation Flemish tapestry. A taste in paintings was rare—it was certainly more common among the Levantine cotton-brokers of Alexandria.

The second city was the commercial centre, consisting of a triangle of three tree-lined streets—Kasr-el-Nil, Soliman Pasha, and Fuad. Here were the department stores (guarded by the moustachioed Albanian doormen, in their fustanella and high boots) which had emerged from the hinterland of crowded medieval Cairo, round the Mousky, Ataba, and Azhar. And here the French and English bookshops, the tea-rooms and Parisian-style cafés (of which Groppi's has alone succeeded in gaining a small measure of cosmopolitan fame) mingled with fashion boutiques, milliners, art galleries, clubs for the well-to-do, banks, court photographers, motor-car showrooms, antique shops and jewellers (as distinct from the goldsmiths who remained in the medieval city). The Europeans, rich Egyptians and Levantines of any class did their shopping here, conducted business in offices, sipped coffee in cafés.

Separating this area from the older city was the Royal Opera House, with its traditional winter seasons of Italian opera and *Comédie Française* repertory. This bastion of Western culture, on the marches of the commercial centre, was (apart from the cinemas) one of the few venues where Europeans, Levantines and Egyptians mingled freely. They found a common language in opera, and the alexandrines of Racine and Corneille were familiar to the ears of middle-class Egyptian wives brought up in the largely French-speaking convent schools.

The third city was nomadic. Like amoebae regrouping, it wandered from the narrow alleys of the area between the Citadel, the Azhar and Abbassia, to the outskirts of Shubra, Zeitoun, the island of Roda and the loose conurbation of Giza behind the Zoo.

The lower-middle class lived here, its true roots in the countryside; and also the small shopkeeper class, gradually being dispossessed by the growing Levantine commercial houses, the impoverished *ulema* of the Azhar, and the lower rungs of the clerical hierarchy in the Ministries. In tenements, with minimum standards of sanitation, safety and comfort, the future bureaucrats and nationalists, revolutionaries and in-

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tellectuals, dictators and emigrants to Canada and the Arab Countries were born. Their families had been atomised, reduced in collective awareness, by their severance from the large tribal families of the villages or the intense local loyalties of patriarchal families in the multi-storeyed courtyard houses of the medieval city. Moreover, the mobility of government employment, the obligation to move from one provincial posting to another, had reduced home to a congeries of iron beds, primus stoves, bulky brass saucepans and washbasins, and hard divans which doubled as beds for the children.

A glimmer of hope in all this squalor was the possibility of acquiring an education at one of the state schools. Elementary schooling in the Koranic *kuttab* was almost free, but the fees in state schools were not low; somehow, by scraping and sacrifice, the lower-middle-class family was able to provide this one luxury, for the male children at least.

THIS WAS THE CITY as I knew it—protean, shifting its various centres, plunging from the heights of opulent peace to the miseries of overcrowding and strident noise with breathtaking suddenness. It struck out in various directions. South, where Maadi provided a substitute for London suburbia or a flattened-out Indian hill-station. North, on the edge of Shubra, where Mohammad Aly had built a palace, and a shanty town of depressing squalor spread out tentacularly, with no sanitation, little electricity, less drainage, and few distractions, except for the annual visit of an Algerian circus, patronised by Farouk, Prince of Upper Egypt, and his four young and beautiful sisters. To the East, the City of the Dead lay hushed and desolate. To the West, the poor of Giza were already spilling into the fields around.

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES, jealous of their national specificities, turned their backs on the tinsel brilliance of Alexandria, yet all melted into the one "Frangi" identity for the Egyptians around them. Perhaps the largest group was the Italians, concentrated in Cairo, Alexandria, and the Canal Zone, unlike the Greeks who filtered into the provincial cities and villages. The Italians of Egypt enjoyed a Golden Age in the 1930s, with a class structure which rose from the semi-proletariat of garage mechanics and chambermaids to the intellectual aristocracy, centred on the Mixed Courts and the Vittorio Emmanuele Hospital, and the very rich architects, builders, and bankers.

Fascism was taken much more seriously in the Italian communities overseas than it had ever been in Italy proper, and the Italians in Egypt were no exception. There were Fascist youth parades in the main streets of Cairo throughout the winter months, and the streets of Boulak, behind the Leonardo da Vinci Art Institute, echoed to the strains of *Giovinezza* as the young *Balillas* and *Giovane Italiane* marched to their community schools. In those days Fascism was still guiltless of its race laws, and in Cairo a few of its most enthusiastic supporters happened to be Jewish. Throughout the '30s the Fascist Party established splendidly appointed Sports Clubs and Stadiums, homes for the aged, summer holiday camps in Italy, and winter excursions to Libya and Somalia. The rare anti-Fascists were frightened into silence; they withdrew to the safer precincts of Masonic Lodges and the nascent Left-wing movements. One memory of Fascism triumphant is of a box at the Opera filled with corpulent lawyers in black shirts; another is of a Youth Festival in the Ala Littorio club near the Pyramids, with Egyptian peasant children chanting "*Duce, Duce*" in unison with the Italian children inside the club.

Then came 1940 and the total and irreparable collapse of the Italian community. Overnight, the men were hauled off by the British to camps in Fayed and Ismailia. The women were left to make do as well as possible with no legitimate source of income, and all Italian property was placed under sequestration. Nothing remained except lonely housewives, a timid anti-Fascist movement scorned by most of those who were left, and a number of Italian Jews opting for British and sometimes Egyptian naturalisation papers. The deserted schools, hospitals and clubs were taken over by British and Egyptian bureaucrats. This was the end of the largest European community, other than the Greeks, whose Egyptian associations went back to the days of Mohammad Aly and even beyond.

THE GREEKS OF CAIRO could never claim the brilliance and opulence of their Alexandrian counterparts. There was no Cairene Cavafy, nor any of those merchant princes whose patronage had animated so much of the Alexandrian scene. Our Greeks were more down to earth, more immediately functional, less Durrellian. . . . Like the Italians, they formed a stratified social community, which rose from the semi-proletariat to the very rich, and consequently they were able to live among themselves, speaking their own language as a self-sufficient society, with their own clubs, services, and political passions.

While the Greeks of Alexandria were torn by the conflicting loyalties of the Metaxian and Venizelist persuasions (this especially among the refugees from Anatolia and some of the well-to-do Phanariots), the Greeks of Cairo were more inwardly oriented, more concerned with their own dissensions in local businesses and church affairs. The Cairene Greek press was like a parish journal, full of local news and obituaries; the Alexandrian Greeks launched into considerations of world dimensions. When the War came, and with it the German occupation of Greece, the Government-in-Exile was established in Cairo; but all the political upheavals, culminating in the Naval Mutiny, took place in Alexandria.

Yet, withdrawn and self-sufficient, cut off from cosmopolitan Hellenism as well as metropolitan Greece, the Cairene Greeks had their immortal longings too. They had their hour of glory in the War years when Cairo became the home of George Seferis, Elli Papadimitriou, Sophocles Venizelos, the pianist Gina Bachauer, and the novelist Stratis Tsirkas. Lesser luminaries from the local community also had their day. Such were the blind concert pianist George Themeli; Charalambos Pelarinos, a mute, inglorious philologist, trained in Germany, who wrote a grammatical commentary on the whole of Dickens, wandering from café to café; Avlonitis, a gifted

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classical guitarist, who changed his name to Abloniz in order to give the impression that he was as Spanish as Segovia; Theokari de Comnène, a naturalised Frenchman, claiming descent from the Byzantine Emperors. De Comnène was the headmaster of the French *Lycée* and private tutor to the young Prince Farouk; on the occasion of every Royal Princess's birthday he published a congratulatory sonnet in the purest Parnassian manner, on the front page of one of the French daily papers.

A memorable publication of the pre-War and War years was the weekly magazine of the Egypt-Greece Friendship Society. Edited by Stavros Stavrinos, it came out in French, and provided some of the earliest translations of Cavafy, Sikelianos and Palamas. In its pages can be found short articles by E. M. Forster, Bonamy Dobrée, Robert Graves, André Maurois, Jacques de Lacretelle, Henri Peyre, and many other distinguished visitors to Egypt. At that time, French was considered the only language to use, especially in cultural reviews such as the monthly *Revue du Caire*, the *Revue des Conférences Françaises en Egypte*, and most of the learned journals.

MY NEXT FOREIGN community is not the French but the French-speaking—a complex diversity of people, cutting through race, community, nationality, and religion. To be French-speaking in Cairo before the 1952 Revolution was to belong to a group of people who felt themselves deeply rooted in Cairo as a place, and probably believed that their lives would be spent in that city until death disseminated them to their various cemeteries, distinguished only by religion or religious rite.

This rootedness did not imply a sense of belonging in any way to the world of culture, politics, and religion which informed the rising nationalism of the Egyptian middle classes. To be French-speaking was to think of Cairo as home, but to believe that Paris was the navel of the world. You could be French-speaking and yet feel patriotic, regardless of your origins; but as the shift of your intellectual loyalties became more of a habit, you gradually lost touch with these origins. This is what happened to a few Egyptians in the 1930s and '40s, but also to many local foreigners. Resistance did come, however, from such embattled communities as the Armenians and the Cypriots, whose attachment to a national language for nationalist reasons made them, at most, bilingual.

Nevertheless, the social circles of the Mixed Courts, where justice was dispensed in French by Scandinavian, Italian, German, American and British judges, belonged essentially to this French-speaking world. The banks and cotton houses, the vast majority of foreign schools, the Catholic missions in Egypt, the nascent Fuad the First secular university, the Royal Family (apart from King Fuad himself, who preferred Italian), the Egyptian plutocracy (both Moslem and Coptic), the Masonic Lodges, the department stores, the Suez Canal Company, the majority of the press (including the editors of Arabic papers), the eligible young girls of all communities who expected brilliant marriages, the habitués of the tea-rooms and restaurants, the young cinema industry, the legal profession, the better-class brothels, the hotels, the tram and métro inspectors, the learned societies, the Antiquities Service, and naturally the French community itself—all were French-speaking.

The cinemas showing films in English would occasionally provide Arabic, Italian, Greek and Armenian translations of the dialogue on revolving scrolls on either side of the screen, but the sub-titles were in French. "*La Littérature égyptienne d'expression française*" soon grew to sizeable proportions, which required the services of a number of local publishing houses. For some of the more gifted, the lights of Paris shone brightly, and their work rolled off the presses of the *Mercure de France* or the Librairies Stock and Flammarion. Few attained the glory of a Gallimard imprint, but there was certainly enough coming out of Egypt to engage the pens of literary critics from Jules Lemaître and Anatole France onwards. There was genuine talent in the writings of Prince Haidar Fazil, Elian Finbert, Wacyf Boutros Ghali, Mohammed Zulficar, Ahmed Rassim, Georges Cattaui, Joseph Ascar-Nahas, and Nelly Vaucher-Zananiri. But the true wealth of creativeness was only to come, ironically, in the 1940s, with the twilight of French culture in Egypt, in the work of Georges Henein, Albert Cossery and Edmond Jabès, who became *émigrés* in Paris.

Yet there was a strange malaise in all this literature, written with an eye to a Parisian audience, often prefaced by a successful French writer, sometimes noticed in Parisian literary journals, lavishly praised in the Cairene French-language press, but sadly limited to a first edition and a number of presentation copies. The second-hand bookshops of Cairo are full of them, bearing inscriptions to long-dead, indifferent wives of wealthy cotton-brokers and State Under-Secretaries.

THIS LOOSE, ALMOST CLASSLESS, COMMUNITY of the French-speaking was to die a slow death in the years between 1948 (the first Palestine War) and 1956 (the Suez War). Today nothing is left of its past pretensions, hopes, and modest achievements. Already, during the 1940s, there had been a profound shake-up of the community in the wake of the Fall of Paris. The Metropolitan French were sharply divided into two opposing camps, the pro-Pétain faction and the Free French. The situation was compounded by King Farouk's refusal to withdraw recognition from the Vichy representative, whom he used to invite to duck shoots which were also attended by Lord Killearn, the British Ambassador. As political passions tore at the heartstrings of the French, breaking up marriages and cutting families in two, the marathon of French culture was taken over by the local French-speakers, mostly Jewish and Syro-Lebanese Christians. These were largely Free French in sympathies: the Jews for obvious reasons; the Syro-Lebanese with reservations, but ultimately persuaded by de Gaulle's promises of independence for Syria and Lebanon.

IN THIS FRENCH-SPEAKING WORLD the Jews of Cairo had pride of place. By nationality they were, for the large part, divided into three categories: ex-Ottoman, thereby becoming Egyptian or stateless; French, by virtue of their

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North African origins and the naturalisation opportunities of the *Loi Crémieux*; and Italian, rapidly becoming French, British, or stateless, because of the promulgation of the Race Laws in Fascist Italy. One thing they all shared was the French language, and the overwhelming majority of people working in the French-language press were Jews.

This was also true of the membership of the French cultural centres, such as the *Amitiés Françaises*, the *Amis de la Culture Française en Egypte* and the *Atelier*; the daily grind of their foreign cultural activities continued doggedly throughout the 1940s and '50s, when English culture seemed to be reserved for the British and Commonwealth Forces in Egypt. French was the language in which catalogues of artists' exhibitions were written, French for the programme notes of the concerts given by the Palestine Symphony Orchestra (largely composed of Central European and German Jews), French for the early Zionist appeals in Cairo, for the Hebrew lessons given by young enthusiasts, for the Catholic Scout Movement, for the neo-Thomist discussion groups, for the discussions in the bourgeois intellectual groups spawned by the *Amicale des Anciens Elèves du Lycée Français*, leading to that congeries of mutually hostile Marxist groups struggling for a foothold in Egyptian politics. The apostles of early Egyptian Marxism were French-speaking Jews, who were also generous promoters of the arts; their inability to communicate rapidly and correctly in Arabic was one of the main reasons for the collapse of their influence and the gradual "Egyptianisation" of the Communist movement in Cairo. Not that this new development was calculated to strengthen or unify the warring groups, but that is another story. . . .

With Zionism looming, the fate of the Jewish community was sealed. Timid attempts were made by some rich and important Jewish families to dissociate themselves from Zionism, or else to reconcile Egyptian public opinion discreetly to the emergence of a Jewish state in Palestine. The Cattauis, Hararis Mizrahis, Rolos, and Mosseris tried in vain to stem the tide of militant anti-Zionist nationalism, but their voices were drowned, for they addressed themselves to a minority of increasingly helpless pashas. They had at best an almost non-existent place in Egyptian public life (as distinct from the world of trade and banking); they had a poor command of Arabic; they had remained aloof from the tidal wave of Egyptian nationalism (unlike the vast majority of the Copts, some Karaite Jews, and a small but intellectually distinguished number of Syro-Lebanese); and they spoke French. . . . Having thrived under the British dispensation, they had remained loyal to it and had not thrown in their lot with Egyptian nationalism and the Arabic language after 1919, the one date when minorities had to stand up and be counted. To the extent that some of them had Zionist hopes, these were sufficiently clear-sighted to realise that a break was bound to take place between themselves and the teeming nationalism around them.

THE SYRO-LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, who spoke French with equal fluency, *had* retained a link with Arabic. The Arabic press was largely Syro-Lebanese Christian, and the movement of ideas was conducted bilingually. They had penetrated the government bureaucracy and held positions of influence in the banks and commercial houses; they were woven into the fabric of Arabic cultural life. *Emigrés* from an atmosphere of Ottoman intolerance to a relatively relaxed and stable Egypt, they regarded Arabic as the symbol of an oppressed and revolutionary culture asserting its independence from Turkish. Their presence was immediately felt in the literature of ideas, in debates about tradition and modernism, in the theatre, the music-hall, the emergent cinema, and the less well-documented shadow world of translators, speech-writers, ghost-writers and secretaries which provided much of the international dimension of the Egyptian national movement. They were, *par excellence*, communicators and transmitters, discreetly preparing texts and formulating proposals for politicians locked in mortal negotiation with the British. They also played an important part in the translation of the codes of law and the jurisprudence which was the foundation of the Egyptian national judiciary. This was no mean achievement in a country struggling to become accepted in the family of nations.

There is a sense also in which their ability to construct bridges between cultures, their availability as interpreters of ideas from one world to another, and their genius for innovation brought upon them some of the onus attending on being almost alien. The Muslim Syro-Lebanese merged into the world of Islamic tradition and discourse, but the Christians maintained a precarious position between two worlds—with an impeccable command of Arabic, they kept one eye cocked on the fashions and ideas of Western Europe and America, and were never able quite to overcome their reputation as outsiders. They, too, had to join the swelling ranks of emigrants from Egypt after the Second World War. Perhaps the final test of belonging was Islam (although this did not apply to the Copts), or speaking Arabic (although this did not apply to the Syro-Lebanese Christians or to countless poor Jews and Armenians in the back streets of the Azhar quarter).

ONE CANNOT SPEAK OF A composite English-speaking world, formed of many different communities, in quite the same way. The British were a self-sufficient community, mainly professional and middle-class. Happily oblivious of the nationalist rumblings beneath them, they led, before the War, peaceful and sedate lives, with a certain quality of living which distinguished them from other communities in Cairo. Not for them the cultural centres, the fashionable lecture tours, and the brashness of visiting French music-hall artistes. Their pleasures were simpler: gardening in Maadi and Zamalek, flower shows, circulating libraries, antiquarianism, amateur theatricals (crowned every year by a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan at the Royal Opera House), and polo at the Gezira Sporting Club, played by the officers of cavalry regiments garrisoned at the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks (a site now occupied by the Nile Hilton Hotel, the sometime Arab League, and the sometime Arab Socialist Union). At the time of the summer solstice they joined the migration to the north. Yet, whereas the pashas and rich Levantines went to Alexandria, whence the Messageries Maritimes or Lloyd Triestino bore them to Marseilles or Genoa *en route* to European spas, the

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English would go to Port Said and board a Bibby or P. & O. liner bound for Tilbury and family reunions.

They were bankers and judges at the Mixed Courts, accountants, insurance brokers, dentists, inspectors and advisors in Egyptian Government service, schoolteachers, police officers, clergymen and retired military personnel. They read the *Egyptian Gazette* or *Mail* every day and *The Sphinx* over the week-end, tracing with self-gratification the gyrations of their small society in club and garden party. When homesick they would go to the Turf Club and read week-old papers brought from Britain by sea-plane.

My earliest recollections of the British in Cairo are of parades and fanfares: a searchlight tattoo on the polo grounds at Gezira in honour of Edward, Prince of Wales; air shows at Almaza Airport on every Armistice Day, with poppies raining from the sky; church parades in Garden City. These were indeed a sight to warm every true British heart. First, there was a changing of the guard outside the Residency; then, from the wrought-iron gates with the monogram of Victoria Regina picked out in gold, the High Commissioner's black Rolls-Royce slowly emerged. On either side of the slow-moving car rode a detachment of the King's Horse, their mounts caparisoned and champing at the bit; bringing up the rear marched a battalion of the regiment in garrison. I remember the swirling kilts and pipes of the Black Watch drawing the really large crowds. The procession, led by officers of the Egyptian Mounted Police, progressed to the small Anglican cathedral church of St Mary's (now a Greek Catholic parish church), where Bishop Gwynne of Cairo and Khartoum, attended by Archdeacon Johnson, would be waiting in chasuble and alb to receive the High Commissioner at the church door. What splendour, after Divine Service, when the High Commissioner returned to his Rolls parked in the little square outside, accompanied by the portly Bishop and met by the massed bands of the garrison! It was a world of ceremony sufficient unto itself, and the patriotic certitudes of Bishop Gwynne's sermons gave his congregation a sense of permanence and destiny.

The high moment of the year was the King's Birthday when the High Commissioner took three days to hold his reception in the beautifully proportioned Residency Ballroom (now a Visa Section divided up into plyboard cubicles). On the first day came the Judges (Holmes, Blake-Reed, Murray-Graham, *et alii*), the Ministerial Advisors, the knighted residents (Gregg, Russell, Campbell, Spinks, Keown-Boyd and Rolo), the Anglican clergy, visiting celebrities and the diplomatic staff. On the second, there were the irrigation inspectors, the agricultural experts, and the higher ranks of the police force (mostly Levantine Beys, with a sprinkling of British pashas). And on the third, the lesser breeds without the Law, the so-called P.I. (Public Instruction), consisting of (mainly Welsh) schoolteachers in the State education system, some members of the Fuad the First University staff, as yet untouched by the fashionable radicalism of the '30s: Robert Graves, Bonamy Dobrée, Creswell, Scaife, but perhaps not Malcolm Muggeridge or Bryn Davies; then the Cypriots, the Maltese and the recently naturalised Jews.

THIS BRITISH COMMUNITY took a mercifully unconscionable time to die. First, it went into a sort of discreet hibernation period between 1936 and 1939, when nationalist riots occurred with disturbing frequency. Then came the War, and the emergence of an entirely new, largely male British community in uniform, with its own ENSA shows, NAAFI stores, and short-lived literary reviews such as *Personal Landscape* and *Salamander*, its own popular press modelled on *Picture Post* and *Lilliput*, its own dance bands, its own academics in Intelligence Units—and its own feeble gesture of friendship towards the Egyptian intelligentsia (then teetering on the brink of pro-Nazi sympathies), calling itself, quaintly enough, the Brotherhood of Freedom. This is the world pictured in post-War English fiction with a Cairene setting, by Evelyn Waugh, Olivia Manning, Robert Liddell, and P. H. Newby.

The new nomadic population had little to do with the old residents, who felt that their patriotic duty was accomplished in working for the "'Kumangetit' Fund Millième per Plane Club" (whose members gave a donation whenever a German plane was officially declared destroyed) and for the British Red Cross, with occasional tea parties for the Eighth Army wounded. The old community was dying, its children sucked into the War, its security shaken by anti-British riots and the crippling infirmities of age. They held on as long as possible, after the burning of Cairo, after the fall of the King, after the Revolution; but the final blow came, for them as well as for many many others, with the Suez War in 1956.

Yet the English language survived. It survived among the children of rich Egyptians and Levantines brought up by English nannies, among the rich Presbyterian Copts of Assyut attracted by the more clement weather of Cairo and the chances of social life in a capital, among the boys who had been to Victoria College and the English School, among the pupils of Graves, Dobrée, Scaife and Bryn Davies, who had gone on to take PhDs in England after the '50s, among the upper echelons of the Egyptian Civil Service, who had probably done some graduate work in England and, in a few cases, had brought back that brave breed of British wives, cast up on the wilder shores of love. English survived, but it did not bear the same fruits as French. There was no Egyptian Naipaul. No Egyptian political leader or Cabinet Minister before the present decade, except for the unfortunate Amin Osman Pasha and a Regent, Aziz Izzat Pasha, had been to an English school. French schools had, on the other hand, produced a sizeable minority of Egyptians in politics: four Prime Ministers—Rushdy Pasha, Ziwer Pasha, Sedky Pasha and, not so long ago, Wing Commander Aly Sabry—and a dozen or so Cabinet Ministers. English was a relative late-comer in the movement of translation from the Western languages into Arabic, and the typical library of a cultured Egyptian in the '30s would have contained few books in English compared with the book-shelves of French classics, Anatole France, Homer, Shakespeare and Goethe in French, Gustave Lebon, Paul Bourget, Gabriel Hanotaux, the inevitable *Vie de Jésus* by Renan and countless productions of the French specialised law publishers.

THE CAIRENE EGYPTIAN élite of politicians and members of the professions were mainly people who had achieved distinction the hard way, through slow promotion in the

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judiciary or the civil service, or through involvement in the political upheavals which culminated in the 1919 Revolution. As élites went, it was deeply coloured by nationalist politics and by a variety of defiant stances adopted towards the British occupier. To achieve distinction was to occupy ministerial position, at some time in one's life. It did not matter really how gifted one might be as a writer, journalist, academic, surgeon, or person of wealth. The yardstick of success was political involvement and the achievement of Cabinet office, however briefly. Few pashas could resist the passion for politics, and the looseness, the almost occult nature, of the British hold on power in Egypt gave the impression that emulation was the true spur to success.

One day, perhaps, a computerised study of obituaries will yield some information on the continuity of transmission from the élites of the 19th to those of the 20th century. *Ulema*, Mameluke families, and the entourage of the Royal Family may have provided some lines of transmission; but the overwhelming majority of Egypt's pashas between the two World Wars and right up to the 1952 Revolution were shining examples of social mobility.

Once pashadom was achieved, a certain channelling into clubs became *de rigueur*. The Wafdist pashas were members of the Saadist Club, a picturesque Italianate-Moorish structure, where argument, loud rhetoric, and no less loud backgammon reigned supreme.

All the other pashas, whatever their social origins, belonged (or tried to belong) to the Mohammad Aly Club. Unlike its Alexandrian counterpart, it was an attempt to reproduce the formality of the St James's in London and the *Interallié* in Paris. The cuisine, both Ottoman and French, was of the best, and its Italian chef was so good that throughout the War the British spared him the misery of a concentration camp. Bridge was the game encouraged among older members, and billiards among the younger. Here princes, pashas, some rich Jews and a small number of British knighted residents mingled in an environment of hushed splendour, dominated by one of the most interesting collections of 19th-century Orientalist painting in existence.

King Farouk did not set foot in this club, although his father had been a frequent visitor. He preferred another establishment, the Royal Automobile Club, where the membership was younger, of both sexes, and the décor less grand: the dominant game here was poker, played for very high stakes. There was a hint of fast living in this club, which also had links with the horse-racing world, and it was generally felt that though its members might be rich or ambitious, they would never achieve much distinction in the political arena. In its heyday, however, it served as a staging post for Egyptians and Levantines in a hurry to take part in the growth of Egyptian industry. Round the poker tables, where fortunes were made and lost, boards of directors were being formed right up to the early '50s.

WHEN DID THE BELL TOLL for this evanescent world? Nobody can really tell. With the first Palestine Campaign, in 1948, the writing was on the wall, but all who were not Jewish, and many who were, did not pay it any heed. The second warning came within the burning of Cairo in 1952, but again it seemed impossible to take these matters seriously. Here was a society which could not exist elsewhere in quite the same way, and the idea of emigration was alien to most of its members. The Suez War changed all that, and the palpable sign was the occupation, almost overnight, of the flats and houses of the departing "enemy aliens" in Zamalek, Garden City and Maadi, by a new class of Egyptians. The new class had been growing for some time, rediscovering the world for itself, as the nationalist pashas had before. Down with the old Pharaoh, up with the new! An élite of jurists, politicians, bankers and doctors was replaced with breathtaking speed by one of technocrats, officers and PhDs of every description. There was, naturally enough, a lost generation of budding statesmen and intellectuals, who might have carried on from the pashas, if the monarchy had remained or if a liberal republic had succeeded it; however, this generation seemed to be anaesthetised by the rapid unfolding of events, looking on helplessly as Nasser and his élite propelled the country into a complex world of deadly seriousness and *Realpolitik*.

Today a vast expanse of tenements, high-rise buildings, bursting sewage, traffic jams, broken pavements, impressive flyovers and self-assertive posters forms the townscape of Cairo, but occasionally one's mind moves back to that city of flowering jacarandas, rose gardens, and colonial or Italian-style villas. An Arabic sentence spoken with slow deliberation, Turkish words mingling with Arabic, the music of the open-air cinema intervals—Tino Rossi, a Souza March, the Lecuana Cuban Boys. . . . An abandoned yo-yo, the taste of mastic in ice-cream, the casual mention of Dunlop (that almost mythical *bête noire* of Egyptian civil servants in the '30s), the guttural French still surviving in a song by Dalida, the blaze of bougainvillaea, the deep-throated agony of a song by Um Kulthum, the world-weary slapstick of a Naguib el Rihani film, the clashing cymbals of a liquorice-sherbet street-seller, the mild fun of a Colonel Jarvis satire, the haunting, mournful call of the stone-curlew—memories of that kingdom of illusion rush into the mind, borne on a host of echoes from the past.

A Glass Looking

There is a mirror in a bed of nettles,
Like a small pool beside the railway track.
Someone cast it out when
Its atoms were too full of human faces.
Now it can let them all go
And reflect the passing birds, the moths,
The changing skies and stars.
This discarded piece of glass
Looking out into space can bounce back
A little of the universal light
Which has taken so long to reach it.

Marie Barrett

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LETTERS

Death of a Giant

I ADMIRED very much your recent tributes to Raymond Aron (by Golo Mann, François Bondy, Melvin J. Lasky, in ENCOUNTER, January & February 1984) and I appreciated especially the emphasis on some aspects of Aron's life and thought which involved Germany.

Bondy underscored this, and this is rare and unusual in the Aron commentaries. Most writers take up his close relationship to the USA, and his various writings about American affairs. But somehow I have always felt that he understood Germany best, and measurably better than the United States—which he, in a kind of intellectual ricochet, analysed best when he was writing about Tocqueville (who knew it best). As for Aron's early books about German philosophy and history, I know they played an important role in immunising some young post-War German minds from those four historic temptations, the H-connection: Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Hitler. Aron, of course, never lumped all of German thought in the fashion of those English academic-propagandists (Rohan Butler, A. J. P. Taylor) who made the absurd claim that everything in German history moved "from Luther to Hitler." Aron was a discriminating critic, making careful distinctions, and teaching us how to maintain distance.

Mann and Lasky are right in emphasising the gigantic importance of small insights and modest judgments. These are no inconsiderable achievements in an age where all the vaunted theoreticians, offering vast structures of ideas to interpret society totally and anew, have proved so wildly and disastrously wrong! Who reads Marcuse today? or quotes Frantz Fanon? or takes Ivan Illich seriously any more? Who will remember Charles Reich's faddish *Greening* or Michael Harrington's "New Left" or a dozen shrill manifestos of Sartre?

The follies of a day fade quickly. Aron's common sense, Montaigne-like in its magnificent sobriety, will endure.

HAROLD HORVATH

Heidelberg

"Obnoxious Laws"

IN HIS ARTICLE on Bertrand Russell (ENCOUNTER, March) Sidney Hook expresses the belief that after the Wolfenden Report Britain's "obnoxious laws" about homosexuality were repealed. Alas, his belief is mistaken.

The Sexual Offences Act (1967) permits sexual acts between two males only if the men are above 21; are not in the Armed Forces; are not British merchant seamen on a British merchant ship in which one or other is serving; and are in private (defined much more rigorously than for heterosexual acts). Under this Act or other legislation it is an offence to commit a variety of actions which are not in themselves sexual but are related to sexual acts. For example, it is an offence for a man to solicit another man to engage in homosexual behaviour which is not itself unlawful, and in some circumstances it would be an offence for a third person to facilitate a lawful homosexual act.

Furthermore, men and women known or believed to be homosexual are liable to experience considerable discrimination in employment, the use of public and commercial services, and the behaviour of the police in matters unrelated to sexual offences.

Sadly, this country has a long way to go before sexual behaviour is treated in a sensible and civilised way. Meanwhile, large numbers of people suffer badly because of their sexual orientation although it is no more harmful to themselves or others than heterosexuality.

PETER CAMPBELL

Reading

The Case of Havelock Ellis

VINCENT BROME [ENCOUNTER, April] concedes that my account of his dealings with my mother is "largely accurate", so implicitly confirming that he brought most of his troubles on himself.

But he now tries to implicate me in those troubles. Since my mother had decided to collaborate with him, I naturally tried to help by telling him what I knew about Havelock Ellis. When they began to quarrel and I was asked (*not* "driven") to mediate, I talked with them both and then proposed a compromise—which they accepted—whereby (I hoped) Brome could continue writing his book without raising demands she could not tolerate. (I wrote to her: "You have so misjudged Brome that you mistake his reticence for 'coolness'. Beneath the surface he is as emotional, as sensitive, as irrational as you are. In him, however, emotion wears an English garb, and tends to outward control and gastric disorder. In you it assumes a flamboyant, arm-waving Gallic posture tending to hysteria.")

This was *not* "a tripartite agreement between the three of us" but an agreement suggested to them by a conciliator. To the end of her life my mother denied me (and I did not want) any say in the management of the Havelock Ellis literary estate, though she occasionally asked my advice, rejecting it if she disliked it. On this occasion, being asked, I endeavoured to effect a reconciliation, but was in no way involved in what the disputants eventually agreed or failed to agree upon.

Nor do I "seek to preserve the image of a relative" because I protest at Brome's distorted portrayal of the lady. What I told him in 1952 of my mother's growing mental imbalance and gradually disintegrating personality is, basically, what he eventually found out for himself the hard way. By her sixty-ninth year she had become an ogre to him. She evidently haunted his dreams for the ensuing twenty years, for within twenty-four hours of the ogre's death he wrote to me about his grievance (as the date on his letter confirms). I agree with him that this was inexcusable. So would it have been had he waited ten days, as he now thinks he did.

BUT WHAT Brome saw of her was not how people saw the younger, saner Françoise Delisle fifteen years earlier when Ellis was dying. Speaking as a witness, not as an executor, I can only question the validity of Brome's "picture of Lord Horder visiting Havelock Ellis one afternoon and having—more or less—to force his way into a dirty and chaotic room, where the blinds were drawn, while Madame Delisle violently protested and completely refused to carry out any of the remedies he recommended. . . ." It was she herself who arranged Horder's visit. The room was *not* dirty and chaotic (my wife was there). And after Horder's visit, and when my mother was away for two weeks, Ellis himself wrote to his friend Dr de Kok:

> "It is most sweet of you to spend so much trouble over the question of treatment. I am sorry you have, for I am no longer interested in treatment (though Françoise is to some extent). I do not mean to have anything more to do with treatments and examinations."

In my rejoinder to Mr Broome I reported how at the time I reasoned and acted in my dealings with two of Ellis's biographers—first Brome, later Grosskurth. I did not and shall not discuss the respective merits of their books, beyond repeating that Brome's book of 1979 was a greatly improved version of the original text he showed me in 1975.

FRANÇOIS LAFITTE

Birmingham

POST-MORTEMS of this kind are never very satisfactory. Unaccustomed as I am to the role of dignified silence, I hereby make some attempt at playing it.

VINCENT BROME

London

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Life & Letters Today

Jerusalem

MOSES ON THE ROAD: *The Israeli authorities are using the Biblical commandment* **"Thou shalt not kill"** *in a road safety campaign. It occurs in a statement from the Chief Rabbinical Council calling on drivers and pedestrians to obey traffic laws.*

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

York

FRANGLAIS: *Fowler's "The King's English" may not be known as a book of prophecy; but, in the 1931 edition, page 39, there is the following entry, à propos the usefulness, or otherwise, of certain French coinages:*

". . . with *détente* **many of us are in the humiliating position of not knowing whether to be glad or sorry."**

It seems true today!

THE TIMES

London

MEANING OF MEANING: *The former Fleet Street editor Derek Jameson left the High Court white-faced yesterday, facing a bill for £75,000 legal costs after losing his 12-day libel action against the BBC.*

It took the jury of six men and six women almost seven hours to decide that the BBC broadcast was defamatory, but fair comment on a matter of public interest and not actuated by malice.

After an absence of over five hours, they returned to ask Mr Justice Comyn if they could have a dictionary. He told them that, in law, he must refuse.

The foreman then asked him to define the word **"imputation,"** *which he had used in his direction to them.*

After consultation with counsel on both sides, the Judge ruled that it meant "meaning."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Athens, Georgia

DOWN THE TUBE IN ATHENS: *The chancellor of Georgia's university system says rock music and television are at the root of society's literacy problems.*

"The TV set and video game—those two devices are robbing so much of the time that earlier generations of young people spent reading. I think it's fair to say that language is going down the tube," said Vernon Crawford, chancellor of the University System Board of Regents.

Today's youth is strongly influenced by a bombardment of "atrocious language" in sports broadcasts and in pop tune lyrics.

"When we grew up, we had popular songs, the lyrics of which were written by Johnny Mercer, Richard Rodgers and Ira Gershwin. I have a feeling that that did something for language.

What do we have now? Orgiastic grunts punctuated with a few 'Oh, babies! Oh, babies!' on the scale."

Crawford said students' declining ability to read and write Standard English often creates criminals. Illiterate people are usually "unemployed and unemployable," he said, and as a result often turn to crime.

STARS & STRIPES

Hollywood

THE MCQUEEN & I: **Elliot Gould is now negotiating to play two more film roles but has a relaxed approach to it all. "I like the way I'm maturing, and I play whatever comes along. Let's say I'm a contented man.**

"Ingmar Bergman is doing *King Lear*, **but I don't know. I once told Steve McQueen he should play Lear in the Midwest somewhere. He asked me if it was the lead part".**

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH MAGAZINE

Brindisi

STUDENT: *The train was running along the coast of the Adriatic and monstrous waves were breaking over the sea wall. The sky was very black and storm clouds were gathering. It did not seem an auspicious moment to be embarking on a long boat journey* [*Nicholas Coleridge writes*].

In Brindisi they were reassuring. The boat, said the maritime officer, would leave on time come hell or even higher water. Nothing, he said, could delay the good ship Atlas, and its regular shuttle voyage to Piraeus.

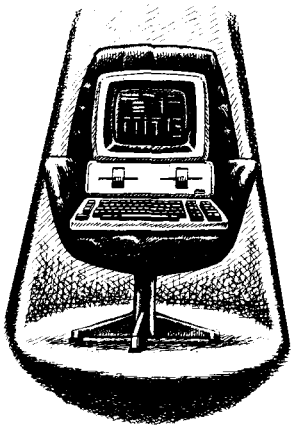
An unreliable young man in the Hellenic Mediterranean booking office produced a cache of tickets. He said:

"You are a student?" I replied: "No, I am not a student." So he marked me down as "student."

"Student is 12,000 lira discount," he said. "We will split it—6000 lire each. In Brindisi," he added, "everyone is student. If you travel, you experience. Experience is learning. Learning is study. So you are student."

THE STANDARD

New York City



ZERO ALSO RISES: *In an important victory for major computer and software manufacturers, a Federal Appeals Court has ruled that all computer programs can be copyrighted, even if they are an integral part of a computer's circuitry. The decision, in a case that has been closely watched by the industry, clarifies an issue that has been the source of several conflicting decisions in lower courts.*

Manufacturers and lawmakers have expressed fear in recent months that copyright and patent laws do not sufficiently protect computer technology, which falls into a gray area between literary works and invention.

In dispensing with arguments that a program embodied in computer hardware is part of the machine—and not a literary work covered by copyright law—the court wrote that "the medium is not the message."

While conceding that, in their most basic form, the contested computer programs are simply a series of ones and zeros arranged in sequence, the Court said copyright protection "is not confined to literature in the nature of Hemingway's 'For Whom the Bell Tolls.'"

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

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CHINA *Urban, Rural, Ancient*

Urban Life in Contemporary China

MARTIN KING WHYTE
and **WILLIAM L. PARISH**

Are the social and economic ills that plague most large cities around the world attributable to the capitalist system of urban development? Whyte and Parish look to the "Chinese model" of urbanism created under Mao Zedong for answers. They relate their data to comparable facts known about urban life in pre-Communist China, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, in other Asian societies, and in socialist East Europe.

Women, the Family, and Peasant Revolution in China

KAY ANN JOHNSON

Johnson examines the policies and changes affecting rural women under Chinese Communist leadership during the revolution and since. She asserts that, although the party has ostensibly favored women's rights and family reform, in reality it has often reinforced the traditional subordinate role of women to further its economic and military ends.

The Journey to the West

Translated and Edited by **Anthony C. Yu**

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